

THE EARL OF
ROSSVILLE HALL

LADY - L - PINKSTON



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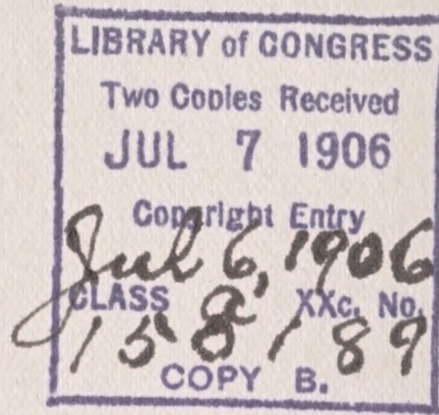
THE EARL
OF
ROSSVILLE HALL

BY
LADY L. PINKSTON



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CHAPTER I

It was noon at Rossville Hall, the day the eighteenth of May. The old master of the Hall had died only a few days since and his vast inheritance had descended to his nephew Claude, who was his only known relative at the time of his death. His son Adrian had disappeared when he was only six years of age. It was supposed that he had been stolen.

The great bell had just sounded the hour for dinner when a young girl of perhaps seventeen ran up the steps, rang the doorbell and handed her card to the servant who answered the summons. She was a beautiful girl, with large blue eyes and golden hair. She was the only daughter of her widowed mother, who had managed to give her daughter a good education in music. The daughter now provided for her mother and little brother by teaching music. But she had lost all her pupils, and Kenton, her brother, was very ill, and she had only a little money.

The servant now returned and ushered her into the drawing-room of Rossville Hall. Lord Claude arose to meet her.

"Miss Estelle Lorrimer, I presume."

"You must pardon me, Lord Ross," she said, hesitatingly, "but—I—I have come to ask a favor of you. My little brother is very sick. I have tried at the house of our nearest neighbor, Mr. Howard, and he is away on business, and as you were the next nearest, I—I have come to see if you will let one of

your servants go for the doctor. I am sorry to trouble you, but I am in great need of help."

"Oh, that is nothing," he replied. "I will be pleased to be of any assistance that I am able. Will you not be seated?"

"No, thank you," she said, "I must go now; and I thank you for your kindness. I hope some day I can repay you."

"Do you live far from here?" he asked.

"Oh, no, just a short distance. I must go. Good-day, Lord Ross."

"Good-day, Miss Lorrimer. I will probably call tomorrow afternoon and see your brother."

"We would be very glad to see you," she said, as she left the room.

"What a pretty little girl!" ejaculated the Earl. "Such eyes!"

Estelle quietly, thoughtfully walked toward the little white cottage in which she lived. When she reached home she found the little boy no better; she told her mother of the Earl's kindness.

Lord Ross had been a poor young man and could well appreciate the wealth he had fallen heir to. His father was a younger brother of the late Earl, and received a very small share of his father's riches. He died when Claude was quite a child, but the boy and his mother had struggled on until two years previous, when his mother died. After his mother's death he had gone to Italy to study painting and had succeeded very well. One day he received a telegram that his uncle was ill, perhaps dying. He hastened back to England, only to learn that his

uncle was dead and he was now sole heir to his property.

Claude was a finely proportioned, broad-shouldered, handsome man, and the white brow, over which the dark brown hair waved, was broad and intellectual. Was it any wonder that Essie Lorrimer was waiting impatiently for the time when she would see this young man? But all the while she was saying to herself, "Why should I be thinking of him, when he is a great man, and I am only a poor widow's daughter toiling for my bread?"

"I wish," he was thinking, "I wish she had asked some other favor of me. I should like to obey her."

He glanced at his watch and saw that it was three o'clock. "Time's up at last and I can go. How fortunate—for me—that her brother is sick. I told her I was going to see her brother, but I think I am more anxious to see her than her brother." He ordered his carriage, and soon reached Mrs. Lorrimer's cottage. It was a quaint little place, with vines and climbing roses almost covering the house. Essie—as every one called her—was looking her best, in a simple muslin dress, making a very fair picture as she stood by the window. If he had thought her charming the day before, he thought her more when he saw her at the window. He was met at the door by Essie, who seemed glad to see him, and ushered him into the little parlor.

"I hope your brother is better, Miss Lorrimer," he said, on taking a seat by a window that opened out into the flower garden.

"He is better, thank you," she replied, with such a

pretty smile that the Earl quite forgot he had come to visit the sick boy.

"Do you know, Miss Lorrimer," he said, "you remind me very much of the only sister I ever had. Your eyes are the same as hers, and you have a look about you that some way reminds me of her."

"You say the only sister you ever had—is she dead?" she asked.

"Yes, she has been dead for many years—long years they have seemed to me. She was older than I by eight or ten years, and I loved her very much. She was very delicate and when she was sixteen she began to fail rapidly and within a year she was dead. And then in one short year my father died, and mother and I were left alone. We were very sad and we were poor and I was too small to be of much help to her; but we managed to live until I was large enough to work and we lived very happily then until God called my dear mother, and then I was left alone."

There were tears in the young Lord's eyes when he ceased speaking.

"Yours has been a sad life, my Lord," she remarked sympathetically.

"Sad, indeed," he answered.

"We will go in and see my brother now if you wish," she said.

Kenton was delighted with the Earl and begged him to come see him again tomorrow.

"I wish you could come every day," he said.

"Perhaps I can," the Earl replied, laughing.

He would not own to himself he was in love. He

reasoned that he only liked Essie because she reminded him of his sister. He thought Mrs. Lorri-mer an agreeable woman, but nothing to compare with her golden-haired daughter. They were poor people, and he was an earl, but he had been poor and knew it was a misfortune not a fault. So the days passed and May with its beautiful flowers and sunshine passed to the balmy month of June.

One day in the first week of June the Earl and Essie were in the flower garden gathering roses, and he was telling her of a ball he was going to attend that night at Lady Merryington's.

"It will be my first ball, but I do not look forward to it with very much pleasure. I fear I will never make much of a society man. I have never had any desire for balls especially, but of course I must go to this one."

"Well, I think I should like them very much," Essie replied. "Although I have never been to a ball, I do love to dance. I should think it would be almost like a fairyland among all the flowers and diamonds, and fair ladies. I suppose rich people are very happy—I should think they ought to be."

"Perhaps they should be—or at least some of them should," he replied. "Of course the rich have their troubles as well as the poor. Now, for instance, I am what the world calls rich and I have lost all the ones I loved."

"Yes," she said. "And now perhaps your life will all be sunshine. 'Tis a long road that never turns, and I am sure there has been a great turn in your life."

"And may be many more," he replied.

"But perhaps they will be pleasant turns like the last."

"There is one very pleasant change that I should like very much," he said.

"And what is that?"

"I will tell you that some day but not now."

"What could he mean?" she asked herself. Could it be that he was in love with some girl and was thinking of bringing a bride to Rossville Hall? Why did her heart ache so at the thought of this? The thought of his not coming any more filled her heart with pain. He had not seemed to her as a rich stranger, but as one she had known all her life. These were her thoughts, but she only said,

"My Lord, I trust that you may receive all you hope for."

"Do you really hope I may? As long as you talk that way, I will have some hope."

He was on the point of telling her how he loved her and that it was her love he hoped for most of anything, but thought best not to be in such haste.

At this moment Kenton called to them that he was getting very impatient waiting for the flowers they had promised to bring him. Thus admonished they entered the house.

When the Earl had gone, Essie began to ponder upon what he had said. What had she to do with the "change" he so much desired? That he should say if she really wished it he had some hope, puzzled her. Could it be that he had reference to herself? No, it could not be that. And yet what could she

have to do with any one else that was anything to him?

"What are you thinking of, Essie?" Kenton asked. "I do believe the Earl has been making love to you."

Essie blushed and smiled and said,

"Why, brother, how can you talk so?"

"Oh, I know he has now. I thought it a moment ago, but I know it since you blushed so."

"Well, I can't tell why I blushed, but he certainly has not made love to me," she replied.

CHAPTER II

While Lord Ross was enjoying himself at Mrs. Lorrimer's, he had no idea of the snares that were being laid by the Misses Merryington.

"Now, Olivia," said Gertrude, "you need not be planning what you are going to say to the Earl to captivate him; for I mean to win him myself. I am older than you, and I mean to win him."

"And I say, Gertrude, I mean to win him. It is a game of chance for either of us," Olivia replied. "And the one who plays her cards the better shall be the winner."

"Now, girls, what are you quarreling about?" asked Lady Merryington as she entered the room.

"Oh, mamma," said Gertrude, "we were talking of Lord Ross. Olivia says she means to marry him and I mean to win him too, and as I am the elder I think Olivia should submit, don't you?"

"Quarreling about Lord Ross! Why, girls, I should think you would feel ashamed, quarreling about some one who will probably not give either of you a second thought. If I were you I think I would wait and see which he prefers. Perhaps he will not like either of you, and I am sure if he could hear you he would not."

Gertrude and Olivia were two very obstinate, contentious girls, and were forever quarreling over little nothings. Gertrude was now twenty-three years old and Olivia twenty-one, and they were each on the lookout for a rich husband.

When the young Earl of Rossville Hall came to his estate what should they both do but determine to win him at any cost. As the poor artist, Claude Ross, he would have been nothing to them; as Lord Ross of Rossville Hall he was a great catch.

The evening of the ball came. As each guest entered the drawing room the two girls watched eagerly, hoping it might be the Earl of Rossville Hall. It was rather late before he came, and Lady Merryington received him with an amiable smile.

"And so this is Lord Ross," she said, "the young master of the Hall. I have heard so much of you that I have been anxious to meet you, and shall be so glad to have my friends meet you."

"My dear Lady Merryington, you do me too much honor," he replied.

At this moment Gertrude came up to her mother—quite by accident.

"Ah," said Lady Merryington, "allow me, Lord Ross, to introduce you to my daughter Gertrude. Gertrude, this is Lord Ross."

"Very happy to meet you, Miss Merryington; very glad indeed," as he bowed low over the little hand which she held out.

Olivia was at the other end of the room, talking with Sir Reginald Stockwell. She appeared to be very deeply interested in what he was saying about some photographs which they were looking at. But she was not so interested as she seemed for she had seen her mother introduce Lord Ross to her sister, and she knew if Gertrude could she would keep him at her side all the evening. She was revolving in

her mind some scheme by which she might be able to entice him away from her sister. While Olivia was busy working out her plan Gertrude was making good use of her time. While Lord Ross seemed to be enjoying and believing all she appeared to be, he was thinking, "Oh! yes, Miss Gertrude, you think your little plan is succeeding! As if I couldn't tell by those fiery black eyes what lies in your heart! You think you can put on your sweetest smile and look amiable and good, but I can see through your little ruse."

Olivia's scheme was to give Sir Reginald the impression that Gertrude was an excellent musician. When he heard this, of course he said that he must hear her sing and play. So going over to Gertrude, Olivia introduced Sir Reginald and Gertrude in her turn introduced Lord Ross. The latter was more favorably impressed with Olivia than he had been with her sister, but still he fancied she was artful and deceitful, too.

Sir Reginald led Gertrude to the piano, and said, "Now, Miss Gertrude, give us your favorite."

"Oh, I have no favorite," she jerked out. It could plainly be seen that she was annoyed at Olivia's skilful maneuver. However, she played, but played as if her mind was not on what she was playing, and Sir Reginald concluded she was not such an expert, after all.

"Do let us go in and watch the dancers," she said, peevishly.

"I will if you will dance with me," he said.

She assented, and they went into the ball room.

Meanwhile, Lord Ross and Olivia had seated themselves on a sofa, where they were for more than an hour, then Lady Merryington came up to introduce Lord Ross to some of the other guests. And Olivia, knowing it to be useless to look angry as Gertrude had done, kept her sweetest smile.

Lord Ross would not dance and after meeting several of the young ladies, he joined some of the other gentlemen to have a quiet smoke. He thought of little Essie Lorrimer and wished he was with her in the quiet little cottage. He did not care for all this foolishness and he compared Essie with all the society belles and was glad she was not like them. When he returned to the drawing room, he came upon Lady Merryington just starting to see "where he had been in hiding."

"Ah, Lady Merryington," he said, "you are the one above all others whom I was wishing to meet here. Let us go into the conservatory. I am very fond of flowers and I am sure you have some choice ones."

"By all means I will go," she said. "I feel flattered that you should prefer going with me to some of the young ladies."

"Why, Lady Merryington," he said, "I think I prefer the elder ladies always to younger ones, that is except to one of the younger ones."

"May I ask," said her ladyship, "who the fortunate lady is? It is surely Miss Edith Greyson. I do think she is such a lovable girl."

She did not think anything of the kind, but she

thought perhaps it was one of her own daughters and she could make him tell her by saying this.

"No," he replied, "I have not met the lady here to-night. She is not here, but I do not mind telling you who she is. Her name is Essie Lorrimer, and she is the dearest and sweetest girl I have ever met."

"Oh!" ejaculated Lady Merryington, "your Lordship praises this young lady very highly."

"She is worthy of all the praise I can give her," he said, earnestly. "By the way," he added, "I would like one of these lilies very much."

"Certainly," she answered.

He plucked the lily, thinking he would carry it to Essie and tell her that it came from a real ball and that it was the only thing he saw there that compared with her; that among all those grand ladies he was not happy, for he could not keep his mind from one certain little girl.

"I am sorry, your Lordship," said Lady Merryington, "there will be so many disappointed young ladies in the country. I am sure by the many admiring glances I have seen to-night that there will be more than one disappointed young lady when they find you are engaged."

"Oh, I am not engaged yet," he said, with a slight smile, "but it will not be any fault of mine if I am not very soon."

"And suppose some one else has already won this prize," she said.

"Oh, I don't think there's any probability of that," he said. "She is quite young, only a little past seventeen, I think."

They now returned to the drawing room, and after bidding his hostess good-night he sprang in his carriage and was driven rapidly home. But those words of Lady Merryington's kept ringing in his ear. What if some one else had already won this great prize? Indeed, what if they had? He had not thought of this. What if she was young? Younger people than she had married. Why, his mother had married before she was as old as Essie. Before he closed his eyes in sleep he made up his mind to ask her to be his wife the next day. If she refused he would go away and never trouble her any more. But if she did not refuse, oh, yes, if she did not refuse, then he would be the happiest man on earth. What a lovely little mistress she would make for his home! He fancied he could see her about the house—his wife.

"It's just as I thought you would do, Olivia," said Gertrude the next morning after the ball. "You always manage to spoil everything in your own good time! What did you bring that blundering Sir Reginald to me for? You did it just to get Lord Ross yourself."

"Well, of course, Gertrude. I know that's what I did it for. Did you suppose that I intended sitting there with Sir Reginald when I could put him off on you, and secure the Earl? No indeed, I had no such an idea. I congratulate myself on being so kind as to let you talk with Sir Reginald. Why, do you suppose he would have looked at you, if you had not been my sister? I made quite an impres-

sion on Sir Reginald and I am sure Lord Ross likes me better than he does you."

Olivia felt better after she had unburdened her mind of all she meant to make her sister believe. It was her greatest delight to vex her sister and she knew the way she had commenced was the quickest way to go about it.

"Yes, I believe all that rubbish you are telling," Gertrude snapped. "Maybe you don't know what the Earl said about you."

"No, I do not," Olivia replied. "But I would like so much to know, for I am sure it was something very nice. Do please tell me, my dear sister, and then I'll tell you what he said about you."

Now, Lord Ross had not said anything to Gertrude about Olivia. She simply wanted to make her think so, but the thought came to her that she would tell a falsehood to make her think the Earl was not so misled as she believed him to be.

"Oh, yes," said Gertrude, "you can get so sweet around me when you want to find out something! If you had any idea what it was you would not be so anxious to know. He only wanted to know who that old-maidish-looking girl was? I tried to look shocked and answered, 'Why, that's my sister.' He said he was so sorry he had said anything to hurt me, but he really could not help saying something. Now what was it, pray, that he had the goodness to say about me?"

But Olivia was too angry to reply. At this moment Lady Merryington came into the room and inquired the cause of Olivia's tears. Gertrude in-

formed her, and then said, "So you see, mamma, I have succeeded in winning the prize, when Olivia was so sure she had."

"Not so fast, my dear," said her ladyship. "You have not won him yet. Nor do I think you are liable to. He is in love with that Lorrimer girl. Lady Reyford was telling me last evening that when she went riding in the afternoon she saw Lord Ross at the Lorrimer cottage almost every time she passed, and we were wondering if he really meant to marry the girl or if he was only going there to amuse himself, when—"

But Gertrude did not give her time to finish the sentence.

"Oh, of course, he doesn't mean to marry her. The very idea of a lord marrying a pauper! Of course he is only going there to amuse himself. I never did have a very high opinion of that girl and now I have a poorer one than ever. For my part, I don't believe Lord Ross goes there. Lady Reyford gets the reputation of not telling the truth every time she speaks and I don't believe a word of it. It is something of her own manufacture."

"Don't be in so much haste with what you have to say, Gertrude," said the mother. "Wait and let me finish what I have to say."

Then she proceeded to tell her what Lord Ross had said the evening previous. Gertrude was more angry than ever, but her sister came to her aid.

"Oh, mamma, you know he could not mean all that! He only told you that to keep people from talking. He can't possibly love that girl."

"Of course he does not," said Gertrude.

"Well, perhaps he does not," Lady Merryington continued, "but he did look so earnest in what he said."

"Oh, yes, and he looked earnest in what he was saying to me, too," said Olivia, "and then look what he had been saying about me. For my part I hate Lord Ross and that doll-baby-looking Essie Lorri-mer, too."

"Oh," said Gertrude, "don't get so angry. I can't say that I have any love for the girl, but I don't blame Lord Ross. Of course I can't expect you to like the Earl after what he said about you, but so much the better for me. I will stand a better chance for winning him than ever."

"You forget the Lorrimer girl, who stands a better chance than either of you," said Lady Merryington.

"Oh, she is not worth the remembering," said Gertrude.

"I'll give my interest in the Earl to you, Gertrude," said Olivia. "I mean to win Sir Reginald."

"Now there's a dear good girl," said Gertrude, who was thinking how lucky she had been in thinking of such a good scheme to prevent Olivia's interfering with her.

CHAPTER III

Lord Ross went to see Essie that evening and it seemed to him that he had never seen her looking so well. She asked him how he enjoyed the ball and he told her about the music and the dancing, the two Merryington girls, and the conservatory and how he knew she would have enjoyed it all. Then he gave her the lily which he had plucked purposely for her, telling her what he had meant to tell her,—that among all that throng the lily was all he could find that would in any way compare with her. She looked a little surprised at this, but when he told her that in all that gaiety he was not happy, because a certain little face haunted him, her surprise was very great.

“Do you know, Essie, dear, the only time I am happy is when I am with you. Yes, I am going to call you Essie. I like the name Essie. It suits the little girl that bears it. Essie, have you not guessed my secret,—can you not guess how well I love you?”

“Lord Ross,” she said, “do not trifle with me in this way. I can not bear it.”

“Trifle with you, my darling? I love you far too well for that. Do not call me Lord Ross—call me Claude. Trifle with you? Why, I have come on purpose to ask you to be my wife. Do you love me, Essie, dear? Can you love me? Or is it possible your heart is another’s? Without you I will be miserable, I would not care to live, for what would life be to me without you? Speak out, darling,”

he said. "If you can not love me, it is better to tell me so, than to be in this dread uncertainty. If you do not love me I will go away and never trouble you any more."

Had she heard aright? Was it possible that the Earl loved her—wished to make her his wife? Did she love him? Then came the thoughts of what comfort her mother could live in if she should marry the Earl; but then she must not think of that, she must think only of love—did she love him?

"Speak out, Essie," said the Earl, "this uncertainty is hard to bear. If you do not love me, say you do not and I'll go away from old England."

"Oh, do not go away," she said, "give me time to think."

"Answer me now, dearest," he pleaded. "Your heart tells you if you love me, does it not?"

"Oh, Claude, I have never been in love. I can not tell whether I love you or not."

He thought now that she surely did not love him, or she would know it.

"Well, Essie," he said, "I will tell you how I feel and if you feel the same I think you love me. I am happier when I am with you than with any one else in the world,—I am happy only when I am by your side. I know that without you I can never be happy. When I hear your name a thrill passes over me. No one else's name ever causes me to feel so. I think you have the fairest, sweetest face I have ever looked upon. Oh, Essie, I cannot explain my love. It is impossible to tell you how I feel. I only know I love you, and only you. I love you more than all

the world, better than my own life; and darling, if you loved me, your heart would tell you so."

"Well, I do love you then," she said, "for I am sure I have been happier since I met you. I know I have never met any one so handsome as you; my happiest hours are spent with you. When you are away from me I think of you all day and I dream of you at night. I do love you, but I had never thought of such a thing as your loving me. I did not think a man like you could ever love a poor working girl like me."

"Essie," he said, "how could you judge me so cruelly? Do you think you really love me, dear? Do you love me well enough to marry me, for the dearest wish of my life is to make you my wife."

"If you are willing to take me with all my faults," she said, "I will be your wife."

"Thank God!" he said, as he clasped both her hands. "My own little one, I can hardly realize my great happiness. If I am willing to take you with all your faults?" said he. "I could never find a more perfect, a sweeter, dearer girl if I were to search the wide world over. Do you know, my darling, I was comparing you with those girls whom I met at the ball, and I just thought of the great difference between my little Essie and them. You were not mine then, but you are now, thanks to your tender little heart. Essie dear, how can you really love me?"

"Why, Claude, I wonder how you can love me."

"Well, my dear, I can tell you very soon how I

can love you. It is because you are as pure and sweet as a lily and as guileless as an angel."

"Oh, you are exaggerating now, I'm afraid," she said, playfully.

"I don't think I am," he answered. "Now let us go and tell your mother—our mother," he said.

"Oh, no," she replied, "let's don't. I want to tell her first. You can wait until the next time you come."

"Any way to please you, little sweetheart; but do you suppose your mother will sanction our marriage?" he asked, lover-like always in doubt and dread about something.

"That is something I can not tell," Essie replied. "I know she will hate to give me up, but I don't think she will object when she finds that it concerns my happiness. She is a dear, good mother, Claude, and I love her very much and leaving her is all I dread."

"But there is no need of your leaving her, Essie. She will be as welcome to come and live at the manor as my own mother would."

"Claude, you are so good," Essie replied, "but I am not so sure that she will do that; she is very proud, if she is poor."

"But would she not do this if she knew you desired her to?" he asked.

"I don't know, but I don't much think she would, for there is Kenton. He will have to stay wherever mamma does."

"Well, there is room for him, too."

"Yes, but mamma will not go, I am sure," Essie replied.

"How old is Kenton?" he thoughtfully asked.

"He is nearly sixteen," said Essie, "old enough to think he will soon be a man."

"Kenton is a very bright, interesting boy. I am very fond of him. I can't help remembering that it was through him I met you," he said. "Now, if he had not taken it in his head to get sick, I would as likely as not never have met you."

"And been better off perhaps," Essie replied, laughing.

"Now there is where you and I differ," he said. "I will not allow my little girl to be belittled in my hearing. If I had never met you, most likely I would have been an old bachelor, a very cross old bachelor; and I know I would not have been as well off as I am now, and will be when you are my wife. Essie, you can't have any idea how lonely I used to be before I met you, with no relatives in the world that I know of. So you think I would have been better off to have remained that way. If you think that way, I do not."

"Oh, dear, I don't really think like that," Essie replied. "I was only thinking what a burden I will be on your hands."

"Don't talk that way, darling—you could not be a burden. Speaking of burdens, just think what a burden would be on my mind now if you had refused me."

"Oh, you could have found some one else if I had

refused you—some one whom you would have liked better,” she said.

“No, I could not have found any one in all the world so sweet and lovable as you.”

“Well, I suppose I must let you have it your own way,” she replied, “as I can’t make you believe otherwise.”

“No, you can’t make me believe any other way.” It was with great reluctance that he went home, and it seemed to him that he trod on air. He reached the hall in a very few minutes and the servants stared at him. They did not know what to make of his looking so happy, when he had always looked so sad.

“The Earl has surely heard some good news,” said the housekeeper, “he looks as if he was too happy to live! I don’t know what to make of it.”

But if she had asked him he would very easily have told her, for he did not care if the whole world knew of his love.

“Oh, mamma,” said Essie, after Lord Ross had gone, “what do you suppose? Lord Ross has asked me to be his wife, and I accepted him.”

“Lord Ross has asked you to be his wife,” exclaimed Mrs. Lorrimer, in consternation, “and did you accept him?”

“Why, mamma, I just told you I accepted him.”

Her mother had only heard the first part of what she said,—she was so surprised she did not hear the rest.

“Why, I thought Lord Ross was visiting Kenton. I had not the least suspicion that he was in love with

you,—but then I *did* think something strange when he came to-day and did not even come in Kenton's room. And you accepted him? Why, Essie, you have not known him two months and have promised to marry him."

"Well, mamma dear, it is the very first time I had thought about not knowing him any longer, and I am sure he did not think of it either. But what difference does that make, mamma? I know he is a good true man and I know he loves me and oh, mamma, I love him too. I could not love him more if I had known him two years. You are not going to oppose our marriage, are you, mamma dear? I am sure God intended us for each other."

"No, Essie, I will not oppose your marriage; but are you sure, very sure you love each other? Not knowing each other any longer, you may think you love when you do not."

"Yes, mamma, I am very sure I love him, and if you had heard him telling me how he loved me, I don't think you would doubt it."

"Well, Essie, I do think you should have consulted me in the matter. And he went off and did not say anything to me, he might at least have told me."

"Oh, mamma, don't blame Claude with that. He wanted to tell you and I would not let him. I told him I wanted to tell you myself. I wanted to see if you thought me a very bad little girl."

"Yes indeed. I think you are a very bad little girl to be in love all this time and not tell your mother, but I always said I would let you choose your own

husband. I do hate to see people who make matches for their children without any regard to how they feel about it, just to get them married off. As luck would have it, I have no room for complaint, as my little girl has made an excellent choice. I think Lord Ross a most agreeable young man and honorable gentleman."

"I am very glad you like Claude so well, mamma," Essie replied, "for I am sure if you did not I could not be so happy. I know you will never have cause to regret it."

"Have you set the day?" Mrs. Lorrimer asked.

"No," said Essie, "we have not, but I am sure Claude will not be willing to wait very long; but I don't care to marry for a year or two yet."

"Yes, Essie, I think you are right about that. You are very young, too young to be engaged, much less to be married."

"Well, mamma, I don't care to marry for a year or two, but I shall not oppose Claude. If he is willing to wait, I had rather; but if he wishes to be married very soon, I shall do so to please him; for I mean to do as he wishes. He is older than I, and knows what is best better than I."

"Yes, Essie, if you always try to please him before any one else, you will do the right thing, and I am sure he will love you the better for it."

"Well that is just what I mean to do, mamma, and I believe Claude will be the same by me. He is always talking of his mother and sister, and I have heard it said, that a man would be by wife, as he is by his mother and sister."

Mrs. Lorrimer now went in and told Kenton the news. "And Essie is going to marry Lord Ross," he said, after the first exclamations of surprise were over. "Won't it be jolly, mother, to have an earl for a brother-in-law, and to have people say, 'There goes the brother of the Countess of Rossville!' Who would have thought that Essie would ever have been a countess."

Here Essie came into the room, and Kenton exclaimed, "Here comes the Countess of Rossville! Good evening, Lady Ross, how is your ladyship this evening?"

Essie blushed and answered, "Oh! Kenton, you little rogue, don't be so vexatious. You can't tease me about Lord Ross, you are too fond of him yourself."

"Oh! I know I am fond of him. A boy should be fond of his future brother-in-law, but I'm not near so fond of him as you are."

"Well, I didn't mean to say that," Essie replied. "I know you are not so fond of him as I am, for I love him."

"That's nothing new either," Kenton replied. "Didn't I know that a month ago, the way you would stand by the window until you saw him coming, then blush furiously and say, 'Kenton, he is coming,' as if he was coming to see me, when he was visiting you all the time! That was a good excuse for him though. I don't blame him for that, at all. If you wasn't my sister and I was a little older, I think I would like you to have a little sick brother, for me to visit too. I think you

are the sweetest little sister in the world, and if ever I marry, I want my wife to be just like you, with blue eyes and golden hair and rosy cheeks."

"Well, Kenton, I don't think golden hair is near so pretty as brown, or blue eyes as lovely as hazel."

"Yes, and the reason is that Lord Ross has brown hair and hazel eyes."

"Well I won't dispute that," she said. "Perhaps that is the reason. You are a darling little brother and I hope you will continue thinking so much of Lord Ross," she said, and rising, left the room and went out to a shady little nook in the flower garden, where she could be alone with the thoughts of her lover.

CHAPTER IV

"Essie dear, I'm so glad to be with you again," said Lord Ross the next evening. "It seems as though a month had elapsed since I left my little Essie, yet it was only last evening. But just to think of the time when I will never have to leave you. Have you told your mother?"

"Yes, I have told her."

"And what did she say about it, Essie dear?"

"She said that she thought I was a very bad girl to be in love all this time and not tell my mother. I did not tell her I only found that I was in love yesterday for fear she would think I did not know what love is. But if I have not known long, I am very sure I know now; and she said she thought you should have told her. But I told her not to blame you for that, for I was the cause of it."

"Just like my little Essie, to take all the blame on herself. But how is Kenton, Essie? I was so selfishly happy yesterday that I did not think of asking about the boy."

"Kenton is ever so much better," Essie replied. "He is so much improved that he is able to sit up today. He is awfully glad to be up again after such a long illness, and I am glad for him. He was so good and patient all along. I don't think I could bear to be ill as long as Kenton was, I'm sure I should die."

"Oh! don't talk of dying, dear," he said. "It

makes me feel bad, for if I should lose you, I think I would die too."

"Oh! I am not going to die for a while yet, nor am I ill," Essie replied, amused at her lover's gloomy foreboding. "And do let us change the subject to something more pleasant."

"Well if you wish to change the subject,—most pleasant, I suppose we must talk about you," he said, "for the most pleasant thoughts I remember having were about you."

"You are a flatterer," she said, "a flatterer of the worst kind."

"No, I do not flatter," he said. "I could not flatter you, if I wished to, for I can say nothing good about you except what is true."

"Love is blind, they say," Essie replied, "and I think it must be true, or you could not think me all you say you do."

"Oh! don't talk so, Essie. It is I who am the unworthy one."

After a while Essie said, "Claude, mamma received a letter from papa's brother this morning, and he is coming to spend a fortnight with us before starting for the East Indies, where, he says, he means to go and get rich. I have never seen this old uncle of mine, but I am sure from the tone of his letter I shall like him."

"And I shall be glad to meet him, because he is a relative of yours. I am sure I shall like him," Lord Ross replied.

"I hope you will like him," she said, "for I am

sure he will like you. Mamma says he has traveled in almost every country on the globe. I am sure it will be entertaining to hear him tell of his adventures in all those strange lands."

"When is he to arrive?" he asked.

"He will be here on the afternoon train to-morrow. He has just returned from a trip to America. That is one place I have always longed to visit," she said.

"And you shall surely have your wish fulfilled, when you become my wife. And now, dearest, let us name the day. When shall our wedding take place?"

"Well, if I must decide that question," she replied, "I will say two years from the twenty-fifth of next month, which is my birthday."

"What a coincidence! That is my birthday too," he said. "But, Essie dear, I don't want to wait so long. Just to think, what a dreadfully long time that will be."

"Well, I will not oppose you, Claude. If you wish to be married right away I am willing, anything to please you. But oh! Claude, just to think how young I am, I am scarcely more than a child."

"You will be eighteen your next birthday, and I will be twenty-eight. Just to think, if you should wait those two years you would be marrying an old bachelor."

"Well, I don't like boys," she said.

"And I like little girls," he said. "So that is the reason I want to be married right away, while you

are still a little girl. So I say let us be married in December,—say the twenty-fifth of December.”

“I have heard it said that it is unlucky to be married in the Christmas holidays,” she replied.

“Oh! don’t be superstitious, little girl. Of course there is nothing in that.”

“Well, it shall be as you say, dear,” she replied.

“And you will be my Christmas gift,” he said joyfully, “the very dearest Christmas gift on earth. We shall be married on Christmas day, and give a ball during the holidays, and my little Essie can say she has attended a real ball. And then we’ll go to America on our wedding tour, and you shall see that wonderful country you so much desire to see.”

Essie was delighted at the picture he drew of their future.

“Oh! Claude,” she said, “you will make me love you too much.”

“No, no, dear. I can’t do that. You can never love me so much as I do you.”

“I don’t really see how you could love me any more than I do you,” she said. “For you are my first, nearest, truest and dearest.”

Uncle Roger arrived in due time and was gladly welcomed. Mrs. Lorrimer was overjoyed to see him as it had been almost twenty years since they had seen each other. Essie and Kenton fell in love with him at first sight.

“Dear Uncle Roger, why have you never visited us before?” Essie asked.

“My child, this is the first time I have seen old England in many years. I would have come before

this if I had known you and Kenton were such dear, good children. I think I shall take Kenton to the Indies with me."

"Oh! Uncle Roger, do let me go," Kenton exclaimed. "Essie is going to marry Lord Ross, and mamma could live with her."

"Hush! Kenton," Essie exclaimed, "don't be such a little tattler! What will Uncle Roger think?"

"And you are going to marry, eh!" he said, addressing Essie. "And a lord at that! Well, well, well! Little Essie is going to marry. How can you spare her, Flora?" he said, turning to Mrs. Lorimer.

"I don't see how I am to spare her," she replied, "but I suppose I will have to."

"He who marries her is a fortunate man," said Uncle Roger. "I would like to see this young man, Essie. When will he be here again?"

"There he is now," Kenton exclaimed, as Lord Ross drove up to the little gate.

Essie ran to meet him, telling him of her uncle's arrival, and what a dear old uncle Roger was, and how she wished he could stay with them always, all in one breath, before Lord Ross could say a word. They entered the house and Essie introduced the two gentlemen. After talking awhile Uncle Roger asked,

"Are you a relative of Lorraine Ross,—Lorraine Moreland, before marriage?"

"That was my mother's name," Lord Ross replied.

"Oh! can it be that you are Lorraine's son,—

little golden haired Lorraine? People often wonder why it is I have never married, and I will tell you why. I met a girl, many years ago, whom I loved better than all the world. She did not care for me,—she loved another. But she always treated me with the utmost kindness. That girl was your mother. When I first heard Kenton speak of you, I had no idea that you were her son. I read of her death in a paper in France, some years ago."

"Yes, it will soon be four years since my mother's death," Lord Ross replied, sadly. "I have often heard her speak of a lover she had before she married my father. I am sure she must have referred to you, as she said this young man seemed to think more of her than any of the other girls. But she did not love him, and she was betrothed to my father then. She always looked so sad, when she spoke of him. I never heard her call his name."

Uncle Roger sat looking out of the window as if his mind had gone back many years. He sat so for a long time, without speaking.

"That is an excellent young man, Essie," he said, after Lord Ross had gone. "An excellent young man. I did not think to ask him if he was the only child of his mother. Can you tell me, Essie?"

"Yes, uncle. She had a daughter who was older than Claude, but she is dead. She died when she was about my own age, or hardly so old."

Kenton now asked his mother if she was going to let him go with his uncle to the East Indies.

"No, no, my child," Mrs. Lorrimer replied.

"Essie is enough for me to give up without having to give you up, too."

"But, mamma, I do want to go so much. Uncle Roger said he was going out there to get rich, and if you would only allow me to go, perhaps I would get rich too. Then you could live in comfort all the rest of your days."

Uncle Roger joined his entreaties with those of Kenton, but without success. Mrs. Lorrimer would not hear of his going. Kenton begged of his uncle to write to him, which he promised to do.

And when the time came for Uncle Roger to go, it was with tearful eyes that they bade him God-speed. The last word Kenton spoke to him was, "Oh! if I only could go with you, Uncle Roger!" and Uncle Roger replied, "Yes, my lad, I would like so much for you to go, but your mother knows best. Always submit to your mother's will, for I am sure she will never tell you anything wrong, and you will make a true and noble man." So Uncle Roger went away and things went on at the cottage in the usual way. Essie grew more fond of her lover every day, and he waited very impatiently for their wedding day.

* * * *

It was the middle of October, and Uncle Roger had been gone more than three months. Kenton had not received a letter, and he told his mother he believed Uncle Roger did not intend to write to him. But he had been to the post-office to-day and received a letter from Uncle Roger. He could hardly wait until he reached home before he shouted to Essie, "It has come!"

He passed the letter to Essie and she read it aloud to her mother. When she had finished reading it Mrs. Lorrimer exclaimed, "Poor Roger, his life has been very lonely! Now, Essie, see what love does for some people! If he had not fallen in love with Lorraine Moreland, perhaps he would not have been such a wanderer."

"Yes, mamma, and see how blissfully happy it can make some people, too."

"I am glad you are happy, Essie, for you may not always be so."

"True, I may not be so," she replied, "but now I can see nothing but pleasure and happiness in the future."

"But, Essie, we can not always see what is coming. We do not know what our lot will be."

"Oh! mamma," Essie replied, "if Claude's mother had only lived, perhaps she would have married Uncle Roger! And he could have been happy in his old age, even if he was disappointed in his youth."

"Perhaps she would," her mother replied. "I have often heard of such things, for as the saying is, true love will never depart. If Lorraine Moreland did not love your Uncle Roger, he loved her, and it is very probable that she would have been blessed with second love."

"Mamma, do you believe in second love? Do you think you could ever love again?"

"No, I do not think I could love again. I am sure I could not," she replied.

"Well, perhaps it would have been the same with

Mrs. Ross," Essie replied. "But it might have been that she would have married him through pity. I don't think I could ever love any one else. I do not believe in second love. I am sure I will never love another than Claude."

"Essie, I believe Claude is all you ever think of. I don't believe you ever think of how lonely I will be without you."

"You won't be without me, mamma dear, for I mean that you shall live with us. It was Claude who first mentioned it. He said you would be as welcome to stay at the Hall as his own mother would be, were she living. It shows how noble and kind he is, doesn't it, mamma?"

"Yes, and I appreciate his kindness, but I shall never do that."

"Not if we both wished it very much?" she asked.

"No. I can not if you both wish it very much, for there is Kenton."

"And Claude said there was room and welcome for Kenton too. Now won't you, mamma? Just to please me?"

"No, I cannot," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "I can not do that. Kenton and I can stay on here at the cottage and still be happy. But we will miss you, oh so much."

"But you say you wish me to be happy, mamma! That would make me happy, still you refuse?"

"Yes, I refuse, Essie, because I think it best."

"Well, mamma, if you will persist in staying, so be it, but I would be so happy to have you with me all the time."

"You will be so happy with Claude you will not miss me a great deal."

"I know I will be happy with Claude, but I shall miss you and Kenton, too, a great deal."

But Essie forgot her disappointment when Claude came that evening.

* * * *

Little did these happy lovers suspect what fate was preparing for them; little did they know that before another sun rose and set, the whole current of their lives would be changed. Let these happy lovers remain happy the short time that they can, for their happiness will soon be changed to sorrow.

"Claude," said Essie after a pause, "I was so happy to see you, I had almost forgotten to tell you that Kenton received a letter from Uncle Roger today. Uncle Roger reached the Indies safely, and he likes it very much. He wishes Kenton were with him, as he is so very lonely. I can't see why he has taken such a fancy to Kenton."

"That is very easy to account for,—he is a relative of yours. Why! who could help taking a fancy to him, or his sister either, for that matter. I am glad to know that Uncle Roger reached his destination all right. I wish him great success, and hope he will succeed. I like him—because he loved my mother, and I believe him to be an honorable gentleman, in the highest sense of the word."

"He was greatly attached to you. It shows his good judgment, don't it, dear?"

"You accused me of being a flatterer," he said.

"But I am no more so than you. You are always speaking in my favor, and as you said a moment ago, it shows what a little darling you are, doesn't it?"

"Now here we are off on that subject again, after we promised to not mention it," she said. "It shows we are inclined to be weak—not to keep our word."

Lord Ross said he must be going now, and they parted to meet again in very different circumstances.

CHAPTER V

When Lord Ross reached the Hall, he was surprised to find a strange gentleman in the drawing room, waiting for him. The stranger handed him a card, and Lord Ross read, "Adrian Ross."

"I suppose you have heard of the son that was stolen from the late Earl," the stranger asked, "many years ago?"

"Yes, I have heard that he had a son stolen," Lord Ross replied.

"Well, I am that son, and have come to claim my own," said the stranger. Had a thunderbolt fallen from the sky, Lord Ross could not have been more shocked.

"Have you the necessary proofs that you are the stolen heir?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, certainly," he replied. "Do you suppose I would have come if I had not?" and taking a paper from his pocket, he handed it to the Earl.

He opened it, and read:

"I, Piaro Cervanco, a Spanish gypsy, do hereby testify that I kidnapped Adrian, the son of the Earl of Rossville Hall, on the fourth day of April, twelve years ago. As I am dying, I feel that I must atone for some of the many wrongs I have done. But in justice to myself, I will tell why I did this thing.

"A few years before I kidnapped the boy, I was traveling through England with a band of my people. There was a girl in the band, whom I loved and she loved me, until Lord Arnold Ross won her

heart from me. He would come to our camp almost every day, and my sweetheart fell in love with this fair-haired, slick-tongued Englishman. I warned her against him, but she said I was jealous. I told her I was jealous, but that I knew he was only amusing himself with her, that he did not love her. But he made her believe he meant to make her his wife. I swore to her I would kill him if he ever came to our camp any more. She told me she did not love me; that, I think, drove me mad. I swore that I would kill him that very night if he came. That evening just before dark she walked toward Rossville Hall. I did not think anything of it, as she very often walked in that direction. But I understood it later. She knew he was coming to our camp that night, and after my threats, she went to meet him, to warn him of his danger. When she returned she was weeping bitterly. The villain did not come to the camp again. He had 'played the coward,' and instead of making her his wife, he had ruined her.

"I vowed I would have revenge, but my revenge did not come until eight years after this, when we again passed through the country. I learned that he had taken an English bride, and had one child. When I heard this I knew the time had come. I would steal his child, for I knew that would reach his hard and cruel heart. As we were passing the Hall, a beautiful little child with blue eyes and fair hair was playing by the side of the road. I stopped and asked him if he did not want to ride? He said, 'Yes, me want to ride.' I helped him climb up by

my side, and when he did so, I gagged him, and rode away as fast as I could. The little fellow looked so pitiable, I hardly had the heart to carry him away from his mother, but when I thought of my glorious revenge I hardened my heart and carried him away with me. No one ever knew what became of him. I read of the rewards his father offered, but I did not want his gold, I wanted revenge.

"The child grew to love me very much, and he thinks he is one of us, as he can not remember his father. I never meant to tell him, but I know that I must die very soon, and perhaps his father is dead, and he is heir to his wealth. I will let him read this, and make him promise not to go to England until he knows that the Earl is dead. I love the boy and I have never had any designs against him. He is not responsible for his father's deeds. But if he will not give me this promise, I shall bind him over to my people, and they will never free him. I am glad to die for I shall see Marjorie again; we shall meet where we will not be parted. I feel better for having made this confession, and I give Adrian this so he can prove his identity. Sept. 2, 1834. Piaro Cervanco."

"I suppose that is all the proof that is needed?" the stranger said when Lord Ross had finished reading.

"Yes," he replied, "there's no doubt about that, and as I am not the rightful owner, I will step out and give you possession."

"You need be in no haste about that," the new

Earl replied. "You are welcome to stay on at the Hall until I return to London for my wife and children."

"No, I can not do so, but thanking you for your kindness I have my way to make in the world, and may as well start at once."

"I assure you this gives me more pain than pleasure," Lord Ross said. "I would not do this, but I must in justice to my children. Perhaps you would like to hear my story."

"I would, very much indeed," Claude replied, and the Earl proceeded.

"This paper I have, explains to you the mystery of my disappearance. I was with the gypsies until I was eighteen years of age, when Cervanco died and gave me this paper. I learned that my father was not dead and I was determined to not break my promise. So I decided to travel until my father's death, when, of course, I meant to come back to England. We were in France when my foster-father died. Of course I left the band at once, and I went to Spain. I stayed in Spain seven years, then I went to Italy, where I met the little woman who is now my wife. Her people were very wealthy, and Marie was the only child. After we were married we traveled a good deal and our first child, a son, was born in Austria. We lived in Austria for two years and went from there to Russia, then to Spain. Daphne, my daughter, was born in Spain. I call her my little Spaniard. My wife then wished to visit her old home in Italy, and we have been in Italy since until I heard of my father's

death, when we came to London as soon as possible. I have made a long story very short. I could tell about the many interesting things that I have seen on my travels, but I must tell you of a kind old gentleman whom we met in Spain, as he said he had some relatives in this part of England. It may be that you are acquainted with them. His name was Lorrimer, Roger Lorrimer, and he was very fond of Daphne, as he was very fond of children. Of course I did not tell him my name, as he had lived in England, and I was afraid he might let my father know that I was still living."

"Yes, I know the man," Claude replied. "He has some relatives who live just a short distance from here. Mr. Lorrimer visited them in June. He has gone to the East Indies now."

"Yes, he told me he traveled all the time," Lord Ross replied.

"Yes," said Claude, "he has been pretty well over the world, but he says he means to get rich and come back to England and settle down in some quiet little place, where he can live out the remainder of his days in peace. He took a great fancy to Kenton, his brother's son, and I presume he will make him his heir. He wanted to take him to the Indies, but his mother could not bear the thought of that. I wonder, by the way, how I would prosper if I should go over to the Indies? I believe I will, for Mr. Lorrimer is there and that would be so much better than starting anew in England."

"I should think it would be much better," Lord Ross replied. "But what is the need of you going

so far away? Do you not hate to leave your friends? For I am sure you have many."

"Yes," Claude said, "I have some very dear and true friends, and I hate to leave them of course, for I know I cannot come back for some years. I may as well tell you, Lord Ross, I am engaged to the sweetest girl in all the world, and it is hard to think of leaving her."

"Why not marry her, and take her with you?" asked the other, "or not go to the Indies at all? Just to think, I am causing all this distress! I half wish I had stayed in Italy. What would I have done, if something had come to part Marie and me?"

"No, Lord Ross," Claude replied with decision, "I will not marry her and take her so far away from her mother. They are greatly attached to each other. Her mother is a widow, and poor at that. But as for my leaving her, I'm sure it will almost break her tender little heart. But I must go. I mean to come back when I get rich, but not before. I am sure I can make money, if there is any to be made. And it is very probable that I can return in two or three years. Have you ever been to the East Indies, Lord Ross?" he asked.

"No, I never have, but I have always had a desire to visit them. I should think that was a wonderful country. And I wish you all the success you deserve."

"I do not mind the work, in the least," he said, "for I have always been used to that. I do not mind giving up all these riches, for my part. Of

course I would like to have made little Essie Countess of Rossville. That is all that troubles me about giving up the earldom. I have always said I would never drag a woman down in poverty, which of course I would have to do, if I do not go away and make my fortune."

"That is the way to talk, my boy," the Earl replied heartily. "If all young men were like you there would not be so much poverty and distress."

The Earl had to leave now in order to catch the next train for London. Claude bade him farewell, as he knew when the Earl returned he would be many miles away.

After Claude was left to himself, he began to think of his misfortune. As he had told the Earl, it made no difference so far as he was concerned if he were poor again, but to think of Essie. She would never be Countess, and she would have to give up her trip to America. He wished he had not told her they would go, then she would not have been disappointed. He had made her future even darker than it would have been, had she never seen him. She would never have hoped for any higher place than she then occupied. To be raised to a high hope, and then fail to reach it! And he had caused all this, he mused; he had caused her to love him. He knew it would almost break her heart for him to leave her, but leave her he must. He would have given the world, if it had been his to give, to have stayed. How could he bear to stay away so long—two or three years, perhaps more! He was half inclined to beg her to go with him. But no,

he would be a man, he would not even ask her to go. It would be a coward's act. How could her mother do without her. So he argued the question on all sides, and came to the same conclusion each time. He must go, and go alone, leave his heart in old England. What if she grew to care for some one else? This thought kept passing through his mind. But no, no; Essie would be true to him. He might stay away ten years. She would wait for him. She had said she could never love again. He would put that horrible thought out of his mind; his little Essie would be true to him though all else failed him.

He told his valet to have his few belongings ready for him to leave on the first train—the next day. The man looked astonished.

“Pardon me, my Lord, but may I ask what has happened? You look ill.”

“I am going away, Bennett. I find I am not the rightful owner of Rossville. The lost heir has returned, and I am going away—going to the East Indies.”

Bennett soon managed to let the other servants know that a new master was coming. They had a great dread of this new master, for the old Earl had been very unkind to them, and they thought perhaps his son would follow in his father's footsteps. They all declared that they had much rather Lord Claude would stay, for he was kind and treated them all with respect. Mrs. Sullivan, the housekeeper, burst into tears and exclaimed, “Lord Ross,

really going away—going to the Indies. Oh! I can not bear to see him go.” She had learned to love the Earl almost as if he were her own son, as she often said. He was very good to her, for he said he believed in treating servants as if they were human. They all declared there was not a finer young man in England. Bennett said he did not see what that son wanted to come back for, right at the wrong time. Why could he not have put in an appearance before they had learned to love Lord Claude as he would persist in calling him. He said that no one thanked him for coming there. He said he knew he should not like the new Earl, because he had been the means of them losing Lord Claude. Claude told him he was very sorry he had such a bad opinion of the new Earl, for he was an honorable gentleman, and he was quite sure they would like him. But they said they knew they would not if he was anything like his father. Claude told them they should not judge him by his father, for he had seen some as good and noble men as ever lived whose fathers were criminals.

But his mind was not on criminals or the new Earl, either, at that moment. He was thinking of Essie, and as he knew it would be his last evening with her for a long time, he went directly to Mrs. Lorrimer’s.

CHAPTER VI

Essie was surprised when she saw Claude coming, for though he came every day, he seldom came twice in one day. She went to meet him as she had always done since she had promised to be his wife, but when she was near enough to see his face, she was struck with fear.

"What on earth has happened, Claude?" she cried. "Why do you look so pale? Are you ill, dear? Has something dreadful happened?"

"Yes, darling," he said, "something very dreadful has happened. Come into the house and I will tell you all about it."

He led her in the house, seated her and then took a seat by her side.

"Essie dear, do you think you could bear a very great shock?"

"Yes," she said, "anything is better than this suspense."

"Well, Essie, when I reached home after I left you a short time ago, I was surprised to find a strange man in the drawing room waiting for me. Who do you suppose that stranger was?"

"I have not the least idea," she replied, "but do tell me."

"It was no other than the lost heir of Rossville. I am an Earl no longer. I am what you might almost call a poor man. But do not think I mind this except on your account, for now you can never be a Countess, you will have to give up your trip to

America. I am the cause of all this; if I had never troubled you with my love, then you would never have been deprived of these things you hoped for."

"As if I should ever have had any such expectations if I had never met you! Do you suppose I care for this?" she said scornfully. "Do you think for a moment I love you any the less for this misfortune? If you do, what a great mistake you make! I am just as willing to be your wife now as I ever was. I was not going to marry you just to be a Countess. I mean to marry you for true love, and nothing else."

"Oh! don't think that I meant it that way, dear," he replied. "For I had never thought of such a thing. What I meant was this: I did so want to give you a beautiful home, and make you my Countess. I know you love me, and that is the reason I hate to leave you so much."

"Leave me? Oh! Claude, you don't mean to say you are going to leave me? Did I not tell you yesterday, I could not live without you?"

"Essie, I must go. I have my way to make in the world, and I say I must go."

"And leave me, Claude?"

"Yes, my darling, I must go and leave you, but only for a little while, for of course I shall come back to my little girl."

"Where are you going?" she asked.

"I am going to the East Indies, where Uncle Roger is."

"Why, Claude, if you go there you can't possibly come back in a year, and I shall die of grief and loneliness before that time."

"You say you will be lonely here with all your friends, but how do you suppose it will be with me? I shall know no one but Uncle Roger. I will have nothing to keep my mind from going back to old England every moment. You will not be near so lonely as I, Essie. And as for me being gone a year, as you said a moment ago, I shall be gone more than a year, for as Uncle Roger says, I mean to go out there and get rich, and then come back, make you my wife, and give you a home that you will be proud of. That is one side of the question, and here is the other. If I should not go, of course we would both be happier for a short while, and then poverty would stare us in the face. God knows I would not go, if circumstances were not just as they are. The pain it gives to leave you, words can never, never tell. Now, Essie, look at the subject on all sides, and see if you do not think it best for me to go."

"Do not ask me what is best, Claude, for you know better than I. Of course if you think it best to go I will not ask you not to go. But how can I bear the parting? After that is over it will not be quite so hard to bear."

"Now that is like my brave little Essie. Yes, the parting from my darling will be the hardest part. But think of the long hours I must spend at sea, and know that I am being borne farther and farther away from you, and think how lonely I will be in the Indies!"

"Claude," Essie said, as she wiped her eyes, "mother was saying only yesterday that we never

know what is coming. I told her that for my part I could see nothing but happiness for me, but now I can see nothing but misery, and distress for me, I will try to be brave and bear it, Claude, but oh! how can I? To think of my darling so far away, and to know that he is thinking of me, and wishing to be with me, as much as I will wish to be with him. It would not be so hard to bear if I only knew when you will come back to me. But you can not even tell me that. Claude, are you sure you will come back to me again?"

"Yes, Essie, I will come back to you; nothing can keep me from coming except death."

"And I will wait for you though you are gone twenty years," she said.

"Yes, dear, you can rest assured I will come back," he replied, "and then we shall not be parted until death."

"When do you mean to start?" she asked.

"On the first train to-morrow. When you awake in the morning, think how sad and lonely I will be on a train bearing me away from my darling."

"Do you really mean to go so soon? Why did you not stay with me one more day?"

"Well, for this reason, Essie, dear. If I do not go to-morrow, I shall miss the next steamer bound for the Indies, and the longer I stay the more I shall dread to leave you. I think it best to go at once."

"Claude, just to think, this is the last time I can be with you for long years, perhaps forever, who can tell?"

"No, we cannot tell," he replied. "But, dear Essie, if we never meet again on earth, we can in Heaven. Do not look at the dark side of things. Everything looks lonely now, but

"'Behind the clouds is the sun still shining,
Our fate is the common fate of all;
Into each life some rain must fall,
Some days must be dark and dreary.'"

"It is well to say let us look at the bright side of things, but when one's heart is breaking, that is not so easy to do," she said.

"I know it is not easy to do, Essie, but if we can, it would be best. Now, Essie, do stop weeping. It unmans me to see you in such distress. Try to be brave for my sake."

"I will try," she sobbed, "but, oh! my darling, it is so hard, so very hard, to think of those long, weary days when I can not see you."

They were silent for a few moments, each lost in gloomy thoughts. Then he said: "Essie, will you not give me one of those beautiful golden curls to look at when I am so far away?"

"Yes," she said, sadly, and taking up a pair of scissors that lay near by, she clipped a curl off and gave it to him, saying, "In remembrance of me. Each time you look at that you can think that far across the sea, in old England, there is a girl waiting patiently, lovingly, longingly for your return. Though far away she will still be true to you, and each time I kneel down by my bed at night, I shall remember my darling so many miles away."

"Thank you, dear," he said, reverently, as he took the curl, and, taking a small Bible from his pocket he placed the curl between its pages and returned the book to his pocket.

"Each time I look at that precious little curl I shall think of my sweet little Essie. Nothing could cause me to part with that one little token of your love. I would not part with it for all the gold in the Indies, and each night before I close my eyes I shall look at that dear little curl and ask God to bless my little Essie, mid the hills of old England, far away."

"Thank you, Claude," she said. "I hope that God will bless me, and you know that the greatest blessing he can give me will be to hasten your return."

After a while he asked her to go with him to bid her mother and Kenton farewell. He gave Mrs. Lorrimer his reasons for going, and she could not blame him for going, but was very sorry. But Kenton burst into tears and declared that every one whom he learned to like very much had to go to the East Indies. First Uncle Roger and now Lord Ross, as he, too, still called him. Claude told him that he and Uncle Roger would both come back some day, and then he would be glad, when he found how rich they had grown. But Kenton said, "I do not care for money, it is you and Uncle Roger I want. Essie," he said, turning to her, "how are you to do without Lord Ross?"

"That is something I can not tell you," she re-

plied, sadly, "but I suppose I will have to do without him."

"Is it possible that I shall be missed so much?" Claude asked, turning to Mrs. Lorrimer.

"Yes," she replied, "we shall all miss you a great deal. When do you think you can come back to England?"

"That is a question I cannot answer," he replied, "but I shall try to come back in three years at the very longest."

He then bade Mrs. Lorrimer and Kenton good-by and Essie accompanied him to the gate. They walked down the path in silence. When they reached the gate he clasped her hands and said, despairingly: "My darling, my dear little Essie. That moment we have dreaded so much has come. How can I leave you? How can I say good-by, knowing it will be for such a long, long time? Essie, will you think this time to-morrow evening who was with you at the same time to-day? And you may know that though I am far away, my heart will be left with you. Will you think of this to-morrow, Essie? Why do you not speak to me, darling? What is the matter, dear, that you will not answer me?"

She had leaned against the gate, and turned her face away from him, for she was weeping, and did not wish him to know it. She had tried to be brave, but the tears would come.

"Speak to me, Essie," he said. "Remember I am going now in a very few moments."

"Oh! Claude," she sobbed, "I tried so hard, so

very hard, to keep back the tears, but I could not! Forgive me, dear."

"Of course I should not expect you to do this," he said. "I might have known you would have been sorry to give me up, for I know you love me, and I know from the feeling of my own heart, how very hard this parting is. And now, Essie, what shall I tell Uncle Roger for you?"

"Tell him I send him my best love and good wishes, and that he must be sure to take care of my Claude, and that when you come home he must come with you. Tell him we think and speak of him every day and that Kenton still talks of him and wishes that he could have gone with him."

"I shall tell him all this," he replied, "and I will do my best to get him to return with me. But go I must now. Good-by, my little Essie," as he clasped her hand fervently.

"Good-by, Claude," she replied, "and may God bless you, my darling, and bring you safely home!"

A farewell kiss on the little hand, which he held clasped so tightly in his own while her words died away, then he was gone.

"Gone," she said to herself, when she had watched him to a turn in the road, where he turned around to look at her as she still stood where he had left her. He raised his hat and waved it, and was lost to view.

"Farewell, my darling," she murmured. "Perhaps forever, who can tell?"

She entered the house, went to her room, closed the door, and falling upon her little white bed, she

wept passionately. "How can I ever live those three long years," she murmured, "without my dear Claude? I shall miss his daily visits so much. I can not stand by the window and watch for his coming, so as to catch a glimpse of his dear face before any one else, so as to receive his first loving smile. I really do not know how I am to bear this, perhaps mamma could tell me something to cheer me," and rising she went to her mother.

She fell upon her knees by her mother's side, and laying her head in her mother's lap, she sobbed, "Oh! mamma, what shall I do? How can I bear this? Can you not tell me something to cheer me? If you do not I shall die! Oh! why did Claude ever leave me? I had rather lived in poverty all my life with him, than to have let him go away to this strange foreign country, and all for my sake, too. Why did I not beg him to stay? I am sure if I had asked him he would have stayed."

"Do you not remember what you said?" her mother replied; "that you would never oppose Claude, that he knew best? Now think of that, Essie, and remember it is all for the best. You can not see it that way now, of course, but you can some day, I am sure. So dry your tears and do as he asked you. Be brave for his sake. He will come back to you some day, and remember, the more painful the parting, the more blissful the meeting. Remember you have Kenton and me left to you."

"Yes, I will do this," Essie replied, as she kissed her mother's brow. "I shall devote my life to you

and Kenton those three long years, and if I do this perhaps they will not seem so long after all."

"That is the way to talk, Essie," her mother replied. "That is like my little Essie. You can hear from Claude very often, and this will serve to keep you from being so very lonely. I was sorry to see Claude go so far away, but tears can not bring him back, so what is the need to shed them? I know Claude was troubled as much at leaving you as you were at seeing him leave. He did not shed a tear, I am sure, for he knew tears to be useless."

But if tears would have helped his cause, Claude would have shed them. For when he turned and saw Essie standing by the gate, and thought how long it would be before he could see her again, it was with great effort that he did keep back the tears. He walked rapidly until he reached the Hall, where he soon retired for the night. He slept very little, for he kept thinking of his little Essie, of that pleading, tearful little face raised to his, and those beautiful eyes, filled with tears, looking at him so sadly. At last he fell asleep, only to dream of the same little face and pleading blue eyes. He arose very early the following morning and bidding the servants farewell, he hastened to the station, which he reached just in time to catch the train.

CHAPTER VII

The morning after Claude's parting with Essie broke bright and clear, the air seemed as fresh and sweet as ever, and the birds were singing gaily in the treetops. Essie awoke with a sense of indefinable dread. When she remembered what had happened her heart sank. "Claude has gone," she murmured. "He is many miles away; would that I could go to sleep, and not awake until his return! Oh! to think of three long years of waiting! But I told him I would wait patiently, and wait patiently I must."

So rising she dressed quickly and began to busy herself about the duties of the day. With many tender thoughts of Claude and his meeting with Uncle Roger, the day did not seem nearly so long and lonely as she had expected. Mrs. Lorrimer did not know what to make of such cheerfulness. She had expected to see Essie in tears for the next fortnight.

"My dear child, I am glad to see you looking so well and cheerful," she said, "for as I told you yesterday there is no need for tears."

"Yes, mamma," Essie replied, "I have thought it all over, and have come to the conclusion that it is best for me to submit willingly to this separation. I suppose it was best for Claude to go, though the parting gave us pain."

"Yes, my dear, most certainly it was for the best."

If you cannot see it that way now, I am sure you will some day."

And then they fell to talking of the new Earl of Rossville Hall.

"Mamma, do you suppose the new Lord Ross will make as good and kind a master as Claude was?"

"I cannot tell, Essie," Mrs. Lorrimer replied; "but if he is anything like his father, I am afraid not. But we should not judge him by his father. He is not responsible for what his father was."

"Claude said all the servants were greatly distressed to have him go away, and so I am sure he must have been a good, kind master," Essie said.

"Oh! I am sure he was kind to them," Mrs. Lorrimer replied, "for he is kind to every one. I do not think you could have made a better choice, Essie. I am sure he will make you a good and loving husband."

"Yes, mamma, I think he will, for he is all that is noble, good and true, and I love him more than my own life. I never thought I could ever love any one as I do Claude. I do not blame Uncle Roger for being a wanderer if he loved Claude's mother as I love Claude."

It had now been six days since Claude left home. The new Lord Ross and his family had come to the manor. Rupert, the son, was a bright, interesting fellow of sixteen, with black hair and piercing black eyes. He was a boy, you could tell at a glance, who had a kind and generous heart. The girl, too, was a beautiful little creature, with black hair and eyes of a deep, dark blue. She was about

thirteen years of age, though she had the ways of a much older girl. She told her father that England was grand and she could not see how he had stayed away so long; that she was very sure she should never want to leave England; that, though she had the features of an Italian, she had an English heart. Lady Ross could not agree with Daphne, though she liked England. She still thought there was no place like Italy. She was of a kind disposition toward those she loved, but was inclined to be very haughty toward those whom she considered inferior to herself. With the proud, arrogant Lady Ross, wealth was everything. Rupert and Daphne, unlike their mother, were kind to all. Rupert told his mother that if he ever got married that he would be sure to choose a poor girl. And Daphne, who thought she must always side with her brother, said the same. But Lady Ross said she could not bear the thought of her children marrying beneath them.

* * * *

Perhaps some one is wondering what has become of the two Merryington girls? Gertrude had long since found it useless to think of marrying Claude Ross, for she knew how matters were progressing at the cottage. Olivia laughed at her when they heard that he was betrothed to Essie Lorrimer.

"I am so very glad that I did not waste my time with him," she said. "I have been making good progress, for I think Sir Reginald will propose in a short time. Oh! yes," she continued, "I gave up my interest in him very willingly. I had a suspicion of how it would all end, and you were foolish

enough to think you could win him, when he has never spoken to you one-half dozen times."

"Yes, and you were the cause of it all," Gertrude snapped. "If you had not disturbed us the night of the ball, matters would have turned out very differently."

"Oh! no doubt you think so," Olivia retorted. "But no one else thinks like that. Every one knows you set your heart on winning him and failed. If I were in your place, Gertrude, I would retire from society. You say Lord Ross called me old-maidish looking. I should like to know what he thinks of you? I suppose he must have thought you were the old maid's elder sister. But never mind, when I am Reginald Stockwell's wife, you can visit me sometimes and I'll pass you off as my sister, just sweet sixteen. How will that please you?" she added, sarcastically.

"You had better not plan what you mean to do when you are Reginald Stockwell's wife," Gertrude replied.

"I am not uneasy in the least," said Olivia, "for I trust he will not marry some pauper and leave me to die an old maid."

"Do you suppose Lord Ross is the only man living that I can marry?"

"No, no," Olivia replied, "of course I do not think that, for you can't even marry him. And as for any one else being foolish enough to marry you, I don't think there is any one else in the country so void of understanding."

"Olivia, I declare I could box your ears for you," Gertrude replied.

"I hardly think you could," Olivia said. "I am past the boxing age, and besides, it isn't good form for an old maid's elder sister to box her ears," and she smiled tauntingly.

Olivia could outwit Gertrude in words, but if either girl had a heart, Olivia was that one. Gertrude was entirely selfish and cruel.

Some weeks later they were in the morning room when Lady Merryington told them about the new master at Rossville Hall.

"And so he has lost his earldom," said Olivia. "I am more glad than ever that I wasted no time with him."

"Yes," said Gertrude, "you were always throwing it up to me about the Earl, and you see he will be much better suited to the Lorrimer girl now, for of course if he is poor I don't care."

"Oh, yes," said Olivia, "you can afford to talk that way now, but if he had remained Lord Ross you would have hated Essie Lorrimer the longest day of your life."

"And would have had cause to do so," Gertrude replied. "I would not have done as you did, hated the girl without any reason. She could not help it, if Lord Ross did say what he did about you."

"Well, as for that, she could not help him loving her better than you, either, and I have heard you say you hated her, dozens of times."

"Yes, but I am thankful now that he did choose

her instead of me, for of course if he had chosen me, I should have broken our engagement when he lost his money."

"Oh! don't you wish you could exchange places with me?" Olivia said, with a sarcastic smile.

"No, indeed," said Gertrude, with a scornful toss of her head. "Sir Reginald is nothing to boast of."

"I know he is nothing for you to boast of, but he is for me," she said. "He is better than having no one, like you."

"I should like to know how Claude Ross means to live now," Olivia said, after a slight pause, "for of course he is nothing more than a pauper."

"He has gone to the East Indies," said Lady Merryington, who had been a silent listener to the conversation.

"Well," said Gertrude, "if he has gone to the Indies, Essie Lorrimer may as well bid him farewell forever."

"There is where you make another of those great mistakes you are forever making, Gertrude," Lady Merryington replied. "He has gone to the Indies so as to get rich and then return to England and make her as fine a home as if she were a countess. So Lady Reyford told me."

"Oh! no doubt he told Essie Lorrimer so, but had no idea of doing any such thing. It is very probable that he has not even gone to the Indies, and told the Lorrimer girl this, so as to get away without her making so much fuss."

"Now listen to Gertrude again," said Olivia. "Always trying to make believe. She said Lord

Ross did not love the girl and he did, now she says he doesn't mean to come back."

"I said he did not mean to marry her," said Gertrude. "And he has not. Now do you see? I was not so far wrong after all."

"If he has not married her it is no sign he will never," said Lady Merryington; "for my part I believe he will marry her, and have believed that way since he talked so earnestly about her. I am sure he loves her, and so, Gertrude, you just watch and wait two or three years and see if he doesn't come, and when he does come, he will come wealthy."

"Possibly you may be right, mamma," Gertrude replied, "but when I see Claude Ross in England I will believe it and not before. And if Essie Lorri-mer is foolish enough to wait for him, of course she can use her own pleasure, but I would not have that much confidence in any of them. Mamma, have you ever experienced this wonderful thing called love?"

"Yes, dear," Lady Merryington replied. "I loved your father very devotedly. I should never have married him if I had not. I really do not see how people can live without love."

"Well, I don't care for any of this nonsense about love," said Olivia.

"Olivia, do you mean to say you are going to marry Sir Reginald and you do not love him?" said Lady Merryington.

"That's just it," Olivia replied. "I had never

thought of love, for I am in that way like Gertrude, I do not believe in it."

"Olivia, I am afraid yours will be a very unhappy lot," said Lady Merryington. "To marry without love is worse than anything you could do."

"I don't think that way," she replied. "If I get a handsome man, with plenty of money, it is all I care for."

"Well," said Gertrude, "the man I marry must be both handsome and wealthy and must have a title."

"Oh! don't be so extravagant in your ideas," said Olivia; "if you are so very choice, I do not think you will find any such in England, since you failed to get Claude Ross. If you had, the title and money would have been gone now, and the handsome man would be all you would have left. I don't think you will find those three things together. You should not be so choice."

But Gertrude said she would be just that particular and that it was nobody's business and she left the room, angrily, declaring Olivia was too ugly to talk to.

CHAPTER VIII

One afternoon when Kenton was returning from the little village of Rossville he was attracted by cries of distress. He looked in every direction, but could see no one, but as he was a very short distance from the river, he hurried over to the bank, thinking possibly some one had fallen in. He looked up and down, but could see no one. Then he heard a cry almost under him, and looking down, he saw a little girl holding on to a frail bush. As he looked the bush gave way and the little girl fell into the water. Kenton was an excellent swimmer, and quick as thought his coat and shoes were off and he had jumped in after her. She had sunk once and then he saw her some little distance down the stream. Kenton swam toward her with all the speed possible. "Oh! if I could not reach her," he thought, "and she should be drowned." She disappeared under the water again, and his heart sank. "Oh! God give me strength to reach her," he prayed. When she came up again he seized her by the hair. "Now if I can ever reach the bank," he thought. His strength was almost spent, but he was determined not to lose his hold of her, and struggling manfully on, he finally reached the bank, just when it seemed to him as if he could not have gone twelve inches farther. He laid her down and stood looking at her, wondering who she was and thinking how pretty she was. Her long black hair

had fallen over her shoulders, and the beautiful little face was pale and still.

"This will not do," Kenton thought. "If she would only open her eyes. I will carry her home," he thought, "maybe mamma will know what to do for her." Lifting her in his strong young arms, he carried her to the house, which was not very far from the river.

"What on earth have you there, Kenton?" said Essie, as he called to her to open the door.

"A real little fairy," he replied, as he laid her upon the bed; "and now, mamma, do all you can for her, quick."

"But what has happened?" Mrs. Lorrimer asked, excitedly. "Tell me—is she hurt?"

"She was almost drowned," Kenton replied. "Do hurry, mamma. I will tell you how it all happened as soon as she is well."

"Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie went to work with a will, and very soon the little girl's eyes opened.

She gazed vacantly around.

"Where am I?" she asked. "What has happened?" Then her gaze fell upon Kenton and she seemed to remember it all.

"Oh!" she said, "I know how it all happened. You were the boy that shouted to me you would help me, just as I fell into the water. Who are you?" she asked, "and you?" she said, turning to Mrs. Lorrimer.

"I am a good friend," she replied; "but you must be quiet; then when you have had a little rest, I will

tell you my name and where you are. You must go to sleep."

"You tell me your name?" she said, turning to Kenton, "then I will go to sleep."

"My name is Kenton Lorrimer," he replied.

"And mine is Daphne Ross," she said, as she closed her eyes obediently.

When she had fallen asleep, Mrs. Lorrimer turned to her son.

"How did it happen that you were on the spot in such good time?"

He told them and then said: "Isn't she a little dear, mamma? With such dark eyes and black glossy curls. My! but don't I wish I had a sister like her. I have one lovely sister, but just to think of having two—one with golden curls and loving blue eyes, and the other with black hair and black eyes."

But after thinking further over this awhile, he said, half aloud and half to himself: "No, I guess I don't wish she was my sister, either."

Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie looked at each other but did not speak.

"And such a pretty name," he continued. "I know you at least think the latter name lovely," he said, turning to Essie.

"Yes," she replied, "I think it a very pretty name," and a look of sadness came into her face, as she thought of that loved one to whom Kenton referred.

"And I have just thought," Kenton exclaimed, "I will wager she is the daughter of Lord Ross. I am almost sure she is."

Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie had not thought of this, but now it seemed very probable that she was.

"Yes, I expect you are right, Kenton," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "I have no doubt but what she is the Earl's daughter and you must go at once and tell him what has happened, for it is probable that they are alarmed at her absence."

"Do let me stay, mamma, and have her tell how she came to be in such a dangerous place, and then we shall be certain she is the Earl's daughter, and we can't be sure until she wakes. Maybe she won't sleep long, mamma. Do let me stay, I like to watch her while she sleeps."

So Mrs. Lorrimer told him he might stay a little longer, but if she did not wake in a short time, he must go without her waking.

However, the little girl soon woke and then Mrs. Lorrimer asked: "Where do you live, little girl?"

"I live at the Hall," she replied. "Lord Ross is my father, and oh, I must go home, for they will be worried about me."

"No, no," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "You must remain where you are, until Kenton goes to tell your father. Then he will come for you, but as Kenton is very anxious, as well as Essie and I, to know how you came to be in such a dangerous place, would you mind telling us?"

"No," she replied, "I do not mind it a bit. I think I should be very ungrateful if I did, after that brave boy has saved my life."

Kenton blushed like a girl at this.

"Why, I am not brave," he stammered.

"I want to thank you," she said, "ever so many times, for what would Rupert do without me? I must first tell you how I came to be there, and then thank you."

"I don't deserve any thanks," he replied, "but do tell us."

"Rupert and I—that is my brother—often go there to watch the water and to gather flowers and hear the birds sing. But today I went alone and had gathered some flowers and then I sat down on the bank of the river; as I was making my flowers into a bouquet I dropped the loveliest of all and it lodged a little way down the bank. I started to get it and I had almost reached it when I lost my footing. I knew if I fell in the river I should be drowned, so I clutched a little bush and screamed for help. I knew the bush was giving way, or even if it should hold I could not hold on much longer, but I felt the bush giving way and screamed. Just as I struck the water I heard you shout you would save me. I looked up and saw you standing there, almost where I had been sitting. Then the water closed over me and that was all, until I found myself here. Oh!" she shuddered, "if you had not been there I should have been drowned! To think of lying dead at the bottom of that cold, muddy river! I just can't express my thanks to you, and I suppose there is no need to try."

"No, do not try, please," Kenton replied. "I do not want any thanks. Now I must go and tell your father what has happened."

When he had left the room Mrs. Lorrimer said,

"I have not yet told you my name. It is Mrs. Lorrimer. I am Kenton's mother, and this is his sister, Essie."

"Oh! what a pretty name. Essie, I always have admired that name, and I am sure I shall like you. I like you now."

"I am so glad you do," Essie replied, "for I can say the same."

"Can you really?" she said, as she clasped Essie's hand. "I am glad, too, then I should like to stay with you. I have no sister and I should get very lonely if it were not for Rupert. He is the dearest brother in the world, and as you and I shall be great friends, I should wish Rupert and Kenton to like each other, too, and I am sure Rupert will like Kenton, because he saved my life, and," she said, turning to Mrs. Lorrimer, "I must tell you of an old gentleman whom we met in our travels, as possibly he may be a relative of yours. His name was Roger Lorrimer and he was just the dearest old man in the world. I loved him next to papa and would give the world to see him. He seemed to love me as if I had been his own child."

"Why, that was surely Uncle Roger," Essie exclaimed. "Did you not say his name was Roger?"

"Yes," the child replied, "and is he really your uncle?"

"Yes," said Essie, "he visited us last June, but he is far away now in the East Indies."

"Oh! I am so sorry," exclaimed the girl. "I was in hopes I should see him here. It was in Spain we met him, and he told us he had some relatives in

England. And he is your uncle? Why, I used always to call him Uncle Roger."

A carriage now drew up to the gate and a tall gentleman got out, followed by Kenton and another boy of about Kenton's size. Daphne saw them through the window.

"Oh! Papa has come, and Rupert too! What will he think of me for being so very careless! I am sure I deserve a scolding, but papa will not do it; he is too fond of me ever to scold me."

They now entered the room, and clasping the child in his arms, the Earl exclaimed: "To think had it not been for this brave boy, I should have lost you. How can I ever repay him? May I give you this?" he said, turning to Kenton and taking a roll of bills from his pocket.

"No, sir," said Kenton, "I do not want your money; no, sir! To think of being paid for saving that beautiful little girl from being drowned! I know we are very poor, but I do not want this money. I only did what any other boy would have done. I do not call that a brave act."

"But, my lad," the Earl continued, kindly, amazed at the boy's way of putting it, "I only wish to do this to show you how I appreciate your deed. Suppose you accept it as a loan, then," the Earl suggested.

"No," Kenton replied, "I am afraid I should never be able to repay it. I do not want the money, Lord Ross. Please do not ask me to take it. I am glad I saved her, but why should I accept this money?"

"Well, if you will not accept the money, I will not insist any more. But you will at least accept my thanks?"

"Yes," said Kenton, rather unwillingly, "if I must, but I do not deserve any thanks."

"Yes, you do," Daphne interrupted. "Doesn't he, Rupert?"

"Yes," the other boy replied, "he deserves more than thanks, but is too proud to accept anything else. But say, Daphne," he whispered, "I'll tell you what, you just take that locket with your picture in it from your neck and give him that. I know he will at least accept that."

"That is the very idea, Rupert," she replied; "thank you," and taking the locket from her neck, she advanced toward Kenton.

"Wouldn't you like one of my pictures to look at sometimes and think of the girl whose life you saved?"

"Yes," he said, joyfully, as he took the locket from her hand, "and I shall appreciate this more than all the money you could put in this house. Oh! isn't it lovely," he exclaimed, "it looks as if it were really you. I can never thank you enough for this."

"It isn't really worth anything," she replied, "but you would not accept anything else."

"Now I knew he would like that," Rupert whispered to Daphne. "That was the thing to give him. Didn't his eyes shine, though? I like that boy, and mean that we shall be great friends."

"I hope you will," she replied, "for I like him too."

I like him next to you. Invite him to the Hall. I am sure he would like it, and so would we."

"That is just what I mean to do," Rupert said. When they were ready to start Rupert clasped Kenton's hand and said, "I like you, Kenton Lorrimer, and so does Daphne, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied, "ever so much."

And Rupert continued, "I want you to come to the Hall real often, for I mean that we shall be great friends."

"Thank you," Kenton replied. "You are very kind and I will, for I like you and Miss Daphne, too."

"Do you?" she said. "I am so glad. I told your sister while you were gone for papa, that I did wish you and Rupert to be good friends, and Essie and I mean to be the same, don't we?" she said, addressing Essie.

"Yes," Essie replied, "that is just what we mean to be, for I like little girls with glossy black curls," she said, stroking her hair gently.

Lord Ross bade the children get in the carriage, as he told Daphne that Lady Ross would be very much troubled until her return.

Lady Ross was indeed glad when she saw her darling safe and sound. Her first words when she had alighted from the carriage were: "Oh, mamma, Rupert and I have found just the dearest playmate in the world; and besides this, he saved my life. Don't you think I ought to like him very much for this? I do, and Rupert thinks so too, and he would not accept any money. Papa tried to get

him to take the money, and he would not, but I gave him my picture, and he accepted that."

"You did *what?*" Lady Ross exclaimed.

"I gave him my picture, and oh, he was so glad, and said he would like that better than all the money. Now don't you think he is a real hero? And he has such a pretty name—Kenton Lorrimer. Don't you think it lovely, mamma? And he is Uncle Roger's nephew, and Uncle Roger has gone to the Indies, and is coming back wealthy. And then there is Mrs. Lorrimer, who is just a lovely lady, and Essie, that is Kenton's sister. We mean to be real good friends, and so does Rupert and Kenton." So the child talked on and on, never tiring, her father smiling at her earnestness and telling her she was a chatterbox.

When they had left Mrs. Lorrimer's, Kenton said: "Oh! Mamma, isn't she the sweetest girl you ever saw? And I do like her brother so, and just would not part with this picture."

"Yes," said his mother, "she is a little darling. But why did you not accept the money, Kenton?"

"I did not want any money for saving the little girl's life. I really did not, mamma. Do you think I should have taken it? If I had taken the money, I should not have had this little picture, and I am sure I like it better than money. Did you wish me to take the money?"

"No, my son," she replied, "you did perfectly right. I only asked you this to try you. I am proud of my brave, noble boy and I am glad to know he has such excellent qualities."

"Well, mamma, you have always told me to do as my feelings prompt me to do, for they would never prompt one to do anything wrong. So my feelings would not let me take the money. Something seemed to whisper in my ear, 'Do not take it. It will not be the right thing to do,' so I refused. I thought of the comfort you could enjoy if I accepted it, but I could not; and see what I have gained by following the feelings of my own heart," he said, holding up the locket, "that is worth more money to me than Lord Ross is really worth."

"Today's experience is like a chapter in a novel," Essie said. She had been a silent listener. "Kenton acting as the hero and Daphne as the heroine."

"She is a real little heroine," Kenton exclaimed, "to cling to that bush as she did. I am sure I could not have done that; but, Essie, I'll tell you what, I'm glad I happened along in such good time."

"Yes, it was indeed a great thing that you did happen along," she said.

"And wouldn't that have been terrible," he replied. "I don't like to think of that part of it. I just like to look at this picture, and know she is alive and well and think that I can see her real often."

CHAPTER IX

It has been two months since Daphne Ross was rescued from the river by Kenton. She and Rupert and Kenton have become fast friends and playmates. Lady Ross hardly liked this and she told Lord Ross so. She said that she did not like to have her children play with children of such low birth. But when Daphne and Rupert reminded her that if it had not been for Kenton Lorrimer Daphne would have been drowned, she said nothing more. Daphne said she just could not see why her mamma did not want her and Rupert to play with Kenton Lorrimer, for she was sure Kenton was the nicest boy in England, next to Rupert.

Kenton, of course, did not know that Lady Ross did not like her children to know the Lorrimers. Had he known it, though he would have regretted very much to do so, he would have given up his friendship for Daphne and Rupert.

As the Christmas holidays came on Daphne told Rupert that she intended to give Kenton Lorrimer the nicest present she could find, and asked him to help her think what she should get. When she was a little puzzled over anything she always went to Rupert, and he always thought of the very best thing to do each time. But Rupert was a little puzzled himself this time. He told Daphne that he just could not think of anything suitable.

Finally, Rupert exclaimed: "My! but I have it

now, Daphne! Let's you and I go partners and get him a gold watch."

"That's the very thing," she said. "I declare, Rue, I don't really see how I could do without you! I never should have thought of that, but it is just the very thing I wanted to think of. If I didn't you did, and that was just as well as if I had."

"I wonder what papa will say to this?" Rupert exclaimed. Suppose we go ask him, Daphne?" And they hurried to the library to consult Lord Ross.

It was just a week before Christmas. Essie had grown very melancholy and sad as the holidays drew near, for she remembered that it was on Christmas that she was to have been married. She would go off in some little quiet nook and think of her absent lover for hours and hours without seeming to know anything that was passing around her. She could not keep up that cheerful countenance she had assumed the first few days of his absence. Mrs. Lorrimer's kind words of cheer could not help her now. She could think of no one but Claude. "Oh! my darling," she would murmur, "how can I ever live those three endless years!"

But on this day she seemed more dejected than ever. Suddenly Kenton rushed into the room and exclaimed, "A letter for Essie, and I'll wager it is from Claude."

"Oh! give it to me," she said hopefully, "if it only is from Claude. Oh! if it only is!"

Kenton left the room and Essie exclaimed, as she

broke the seal: "Thank God, who does all things well, it is from him!" And she read:

"MY OWN PRECIOUS LITTLE ESSIE:—It is with a sad and aching heart I write you. It makes me sad to think how miserable I have caused you to be, and it causes my heart to ache when I think that I must remain here so many long months. I found Uncle Roger in the best of spirits and enjoying life as well as could be expected way out here. Of course it is useless for me to tell you he was surprised at seeing me in the Indies. The first thing he wanted to know was why I had left you? But when I gave my reasons he said that I did just the right thing.

"Uncle Roger is succeeding very well and I hope I shall be as successful as he. If I should have such luck, I can possibly get back to England sooner than I first thought. But before I go any farther I must tell you what an experience I had on the ocean.

"After being sick for three days, sick enough almost to die, I ventured on deck one evening, and noticed that the clouds were gathering up in the west. I mentioned this to one of the passengers, and he said that without any doubt we should have a storm, as this was a good locality for storms. We could see a few flashes of lightning now and then, and the captain shouted to the men to haul down the foresail and topsails. I remained on deck till the rain began to fall, and then went below. The storm now began in earnest and the vessel rocked to and fro. Of course I began to think, suppose she should sink, and my thoughts went back to England

with a bound. What would become of my little Essie if I should be drowned? Would she hear of my death or would she think I had played her false? The thought almost drove me crazy, and rising I started to go on deck again. But when I reached the hatchway there was such a blinding flash of lightning and sheet of rain that it drove me below again. The vessel groaned and creaked as if she would split in two any moment. If it had not been for that little girl waiting for me at home I don't think I should have minded it in the least. But your words kept ringing in my ear above the fury of the storm, 'What if we should never meet again!' But I made up my mind to trust in God, who doeth all things well, and when I had done this I felt better. The tempest lasted all night. How the vessel stood the storm I can never tell. But she did and that is enough for me.

"The weather was fine after this until I reached the Indies. This is a fine country and sometimes I think were it not for that little girl at home I should like to stay here all my life. But when I think of you, I know that no other place than England shall ever be my home. How I miss that sweet little face of yours! Sometimes I fancy I can see you just as you were the last time I saw you, standing by the gate watching me out of sight, and even then trying to smile through your tears.

"Do you know, Essie dear, when I turned and saw you standing there, it did take all my courage to leave you? I would give the world to be with you tonight. But all I can do is look at your picture

and that little curl you gave me. Nothing would cause me to part with these precious things—your picture and the pretty curl. Essie, I hope you do not miss me so very much, for I had rather hear of you being happy than hear anything you could tell me. Do try to be happy. Will you, dear? I can not tell you I am happy, but should like so much to hear that you are. Why was it, oh! why was it, that we two should have been parted? I hope it will all come out right. Why could things not have remained just as they were when I first met you? If they only had, I should not have been so far away from my darling tonight.

“Perhaps you were right, Essie, after all, when you said it was unlucky to set one of the Christmas holidays as our wedding day, for it proved true after all. If it has not proved unlucky for us, I cannot tell the reason why. I cannot spend a pleasant Christmas, but I hope that you may. But will you think of me on that day? But why should I ask this? I know my little Essie thinks of me every day, don’t you, dear? And if I should try to tell you how often I have thought of you since I left you, I should say ‘only once,’ but that ‘once’ is all the time.

“Essie, have you become acquainted with the Earl’s family? If so, how do you like them? For I am sure they are good people. I should like so much to see those two children, Daphne especially. I think that is what the Earl called her. I think from her name I should like her. Well, my dear, I suppose it is time for me to close this, as there is

nothing interesting to tell you. Give my best love to your mother and Kenton, and tell them I should like so much to see them. Uncle Roger sends much love to all. And now, my darling, I must bid you good-by for this time. I hope I shall have better news to write next time. Please, darling, answer this immediately. And remember, I am as true to you as the angels are in Heaven. I love you just the same.

“From your ever faithful and devoted lover,
“CLAUDE.”

When Essie had finished reading, she sat for a long time with her hands folded and her thoughts far away in the Indies. Then Mrs. Lorrimer came into the room and said, “How is Claude, Essie dear? Kenton tells me you have a letter from him.”

“He is all right, mamma, but he does wish to be back in old England so much. He sends you and Kenton his love and respects, so does Uncle Roger.”

“I suppose Roger was surprised at seeing Claude in the Indies?” she asked.

“Yes,” Essie replied, “though he told him he did just the right thing. But, oh! mamma, this letter makes me want to see Claude more than ever! And just to think that only two months have gone since he left me. It seems two years. How will it be at the end of two years?”

“Perhaps time will not go by so slow when you become accustomed to his absence,” Mrs. Lorrimer said.

"Mamma, I shall never become accustomed to his absence, for I miss him more each day."

"I am sorry," Mrs. Lorrimer said, "that you did not continue the way you started the first few days, for I am sure it would have been better than this gloomy state of mind."

"Yes, mamma, I know, but I could not, and I think I must die of loneliness if he does not soon come back. Were you ever parted from papa?"

"No, Essie," her mother replied, "we were never parted until death parted us. And I am sure that was worse than your parting, Essie, for we can never meet on earth again, and you and Claude will meet again. Suppose it had been death that robbed you of your lover? It would have been so very much worse."

"Yes, mamma, I know that would be worse, but if you have never experienced a parting like this, you cannot know what it is like. It is possible that we may meet again, and it is just as probable that we may not. But if we do not, I am sure I shall not care to live, for what pleasure would there be in living without my Claude?"

"It is true, Essie, there would not be any more pleasure in this world for you. But don't think that way, you must be hopeful."

"Hoping will not bring him back, mamma, any more than tears," Essie replied, sadly, "for if either would bring him back he would have come long before this. But I cannot blame Claude. For he could not help the way circumstances shaped themselves any more than I. He tries to put all the blame

on himself, but I will not have it so. I do not blame him at all, do you, mamma?"

"No, I do not in the least," she replied, "for I know it was best for him to go."

"I am very glad you think that way," Essie replied, "for I did not want to censure Claude. I mean to answer Claude's letter this very night," she exclaimed, "so as to get it off on the next steamer, for he asked me to write immediately."

That night she did write Claude a long, loving letter, telling him how much she missed him, and how very lonely and sad she had been. She told him that if all was to go over again, she should beg him not to leave her, but as he was gone, she would not ask him to return until he was willing. And she wrote about the Earl's family, and bade him tell Uncle Roger that Daphne still remembered the old gentleman whom she had learned to call "Uncle Roger," and how much she and Rupert seemed to think of Kenton, and about Kenton's saving Daphne's life.

In fact, she told him everything that had passed since he left home, and after sending Uncle Roger many loving messages she asked him to do as she had done and write very soon to his own faithful little Essie.

And now let us go in the same steamer with this letter, and find how Claude and Mr. Lorrimer are prospering in the far East.

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The moon shines brightly on this far-away land, and its beams light up the room in which Claude and

Uncle Roger are seated, close by the door of their little hut. Mr. Lorrimer is saying, "Claude, my mind keeps straying back to England to-night, and to Essie. I can't help thinking there's a letter from some of them."

"So do I," Claude replies. "I think I will go and see if there is not. Probably there is one for you, Uncle Roger, from Kenton. I am hardly expecting any from Essie so soon as this. Dear little Essie," he sighed, "what would I not give to be with you to-night?" And taking her picture from his pocket he gazes at it long and earnestly, then returns it to his pocket and rises to leave the room. He soon returns and Uncle Roger can tell by the look of joy on his face that he has news from England. "What a joyful surprise, Uncle Roger!" he exclaims. "A letter from Essie!" And seating himself by the little table he is soon lost in its pages.

He read the letter, then reread it again and again, and then, placing it in his pocket, he folds his arms on the table and bowing his head on his arms, he thinks about home and England. Essie's letter has made him very sad. He can hardly bear the thought of Essie, his little light-hearted Essie, so sad and gloomy. Had he broken her heart? "I do so wish to see you, but I will not ask you to return until you are willing." With these words on his lips, his head bowed on the table, he falls into a deep sleep, and dreams of that same little face with the pleading blue eyes which had haunted him so the night before he left England.

"My little darling," he murmured, "my dear little Essie."

"The lad is dreaming of Essie," said Uncle Roger, soberly, to himself. "It affects him very much to get a letter from her. I have never heard him talking in his sleep before."

And then Uncle Roger, too, thinking of England, and of his youthful days, when he had loved as this young man loves now, and, taking a golden curl from his big pocketbook, he gazes at it awhile and presses it to his lips, murmuring, "Lorraine, dear Lorraine. A little golden-haired lass when I knew her, but an angel now."

Uncle Roger looks very much the same as he did when he left England, but Claude hardly looks the same. He looks as if years instead of months had passed. There are shadows under his eyes, and his face looks much older.

CHAPTER X.

It was Christmas morning. The day broke bright and clear. A heavy snow had fallen the night before and the merry tinkling of sleigh bells could be heard far and near. Of all the happy children in England, Kenton Lorrimer was one of the happiest, for he found a package pushed up against the front door. On picking it up he saw that his own name was written on the outside.

"A Christmas present, I'll wager," he exclaimed. "Who has had the good will toward me to do this." He opened it and what was his surprise to find in a pretty plush box a beautiful gold watch and chain.

"Oh!" he exclaimed. "Essie! Mamma, look! Can it be really for me?"

"Isn't it lovely?" exclaimed Essie and Mrs. Lorrimer in the same breath.

"But where did it come from, Kenton?" his mother asked.

"I cannot imagine," he replied. "But I would like to know."

As he took it out of the box a little paper fluttered down, and seizing it Kenton read: "A Christmas present, from Rupert and Daphne Ross, to their very dear and honored friend, Kenton Lorrimer."

"Well now," he exclaimed, "if they are not just the best friends I have! My! But don't I wish I had something fine to give them! That is what comes of being poor."

"I am sure they did not expect anything in

return," Essie said; "and I am sure I would not trouble about that."

"Don't I wish I could see them now, to thank them. And I will just wear Daphne's picture on the chain," and, rising, he went for the locket and fastened it to the chain.

"Now," he said, "isn't that lovely? I said a moment ago I was poor, but I'm rich! I shall never complain of being poor any more so long as I have this dear little picture, anyway."

At this moment a tinkling of sleigh bells was heard and Rupert and Daphne Ross ran up the path to the house.

"Oh! it's you all, is it?" exclaimed Kenton. "The very ones I was wishing to see! I want to thank you for—"

But they interrupted him.

"Now you just come and get right in this sleigh and go sleigh-riding. We will not let you thank us until we are started."

"Oh! but I must do that first."

"No," said Daphne, "you just come right along. We are in a hurry and we don't want any thanks anyway."

So seizing his cap, Kenton rushed out of the room with them, and they were soon lost to sight down the snow-drifted road.

Happy days of childhood! Why is it that people cannot always remain light-hearted and gay? As the years roll on sorrow comes and despair and the children who were once so happy and gay, grown up to be sober and sad-faced men and women.

But to Essie the Christmas day seemed very lonely, for her thoughts strayed away to the far East, with that absent dear one.

"Mamma, things are turning out for the best after all," she said to Mrs. Lorrimer, when the children had gone. "See how very happy Kenton is! And had it not been for those Ross children coming to the Hall, he would not have been so happy. But, oh, mamma," and she sighed heavily, "how utterly lonely I am! It hardly seems as if the dear old Christmas-tide was here! I should like to know so much how my dear Claude is to-day and what he is doing."

Kenton returned in two or three hours, looking fresh and rosy after his brisk ride in the cold December wind, and declared he had never enjoyed himself more in all his life, and that he knew Daphne was just the sweetest, dearest little girl he knew, and the loveliest.

"Why, Kenton, have you discovered that you like Daphne the better?" Essie asked. "You were saying this morning you really could not tell which you liked the better."

"Yes, I think I do," he replied. "I don't like her in the way I do Rupert, and I suppose I must think the more of her. But I am very fond of Rupert, too, for he has been so kind to me. Why! it was he who suggested giving me this watch. Daphne wanted to give me a real nice Christmas present and just could not think what it should be. And, as she always does when she gets puzzled, she went to 'Rue,' and he suggested that they go in partners

and get me the watch. Daphne told me all about it this morning. We sat on the back seat and Rupert sat on the front seat and drove. I'll tell you what, it's jolly, mamma, to go sleigh-riding with a pretty girl. And oh! mamma, Rupert upset the sleigh and tumbled us all out in a snow-drift! Daphne says she does love to sleigh-ride and I'll tell you I do, too, especially when I can go with Daphne and Rupert. And, mamma, Rupert says he is going away to school after this year, and don't I wish I could go with him? He says that he would give the world if I would go, and may I go? Mamma, it will be so very lonely when Rupert goes away."

"I would like you to go ever so much, Kenton," his mother replied. "But I am afraid I cannot afford to send you."

"Oh, don't tell me that, mamma! I do want to go so much!" Kenton replied, sorrowfully.

"Well, do not look so dejected," his mother replied, "for God always provides for His own. Possibly He will provide some way for you to go."

Kenton brightened up at this and said, "Mamma, if I only knew where I could find work, I should go to work at once, and I could soon earn money enough."

"Yes, my son," she replied, "but I really don't see where you can find any work."

Then he fell to talking of the sleigh-ride again and did not let the money question trouble him. He had many more pleasant rides like this during the holidays, for the snow lasted a week.

Kenton told Rupert that Mrs. Lorrimer was will-

ing enough for him to go to school, but could not spare the money, and Rupert said: "If you had only taken the money papa wished you to, there would have been no obstacle."

"No, Rupert, I should like to go to school ever so much, but I am glad I did not take the money. If the same thing was to be done again I should do exactly as I did then."

"Well, perhaps you are right, after all," Rupert replied, "and I think I like you all the better for it."

"Thank you," Kenton replied, "and I am sure I was right. Now, Rue, you just look at it this way. Suppose you had saved my sister from being drowned. Do you think you would take money for it?"

"No," Rupert replied, "I should not."

"And I was just the same way," Kenton said. "I did not want money for that. But I do want to work and earn enough so I can go to school with you."

"And I hope you may," Rupert replied. "I know papa would loan you enough, and then let you repay it in your own time, but you are so proud, you would not accept it, would you?"

"No," Kenton replied, "I don't think I should."

And when Rupert told Lord Ross how much Kenton desired to go with him to school and how he wished to earn money enough to carry him through, Lord Ross said, "Why, he is the very lad I need, if he is willing to leave home. I need a boy in my bank, and as I should like to repay him some way for the great service he has done me, I think I shall

go over tomorrow and find out if his mother is willing to have him work for me. I will pay him well for I am sure he is honor itself."

So Lord Ross rode over to Mrs. Lorrimer's the very next day and told his plan to Mrs. Lorrimer. She was willing and then Lord Ross told Kenton that he was very much in need of a boy in his bank in the town of S———, and that he thought he was the boy he needed, as he could trust him in any way. Kenton accepted the situation and Lord Ross asked him when he could be ready to go to work. Kenton replied that he was ready at any moment.

"That is the kind of a boy I like," said the Earl, "one who is always ready. If it is agreeable with your mother, you can start next Monday."

Mrs. Lorrimer assented and it was arranged that he should go to the town of S——— and commence work on the following Monday.

"What glorious luck," said Kenton, when Lord Ross had gone. "Now, mamma, I can soon earn enough money to go with Rupert to school. A way was provided for me to earn money sooner than I was expecting."

"Yes, Kenton," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "But I am afraid you cannot earn money enough this year to go with Rupert."

"But, mamma, I can go until what money I have earned is exhausted, then I can work again and go until that is gone, and continue in this way until I finish my education."

"I suppose you will have to do that way," she replied.

"Mamma, I hate to leave you and Essie here alone. Of course it isn't so very far to the town of S——, but you will be alone just the same. But I mean to come home every Saturday night and stay over Sunday. Then there is Daphne. My, but I hate to leave Daphne and Rupert! But then when I think that I can earn money, I don't mind it so much."

Monday morning came and Kenton was established in his new duties as messenger boy at Lord Ross's bank. He soon learned what his duties were and on the following Saturday when Lord Ross went over to the town, he called at the bank to see how Kenton liked his new situation. He found him in the highest spirits, and he declared that he liked it better every day. Mr. Eperson, the acting president and teller of the bank, told Lord Ross that Kenton was the liveliest errand boy they had ever had since he came there. He said Kenton did his work quickly and intelligently. Lord Ross waited till Kenton could leave the bank, and they took the next train back to Rossville. A carriage was at the station to meet Lord Ross, and he invited Kenton to ride with him.

When they stopped at Mrs. Lorrimer's, the Earl told Mrs. Lorrimer that he was well pleased with her son, and that they gave an excellent report of him at the bank. She told the Earl she could never thank him sufficiently for giving Kenton the situation, but the Earl said he should be the one to give the thanks, for he could never repay Kenton for the great service he had done him, and that he needed just such a boy as Kenton and was sure he

could not have obtained one that suited him so well. Kenton had so much to tell his mother and Essie, and so much to tell Rupert and Daphne, that it did not seem very long until Monday morning came again. Rupert said that he would like ever so much to have a situation like that, but his mother would not hear of it. But when he got to be a man he meant to go into business just as his father had done; for he was sure it was better to work than to play. And so the boys planned that when they were men they would go into business as partners, and Daphne, who thought she must be in everything Rupert was in, said she meant to learn to be a bookkeeper, so as to keep books for them, and asked them if she might. They told her of course they would need a bookkeeper and she would be the very one for that. And all Rupert and Daphne could talk and think of for the next fortnight was when Rupert and Kenton should be partners in business with Daphne as their bookkeeper.

"My! But won't that sound high, 'Lorrimer and Ross, Bankers,' or 'Merchants,' or whatever we shall be. I really don't know which I would rather be. I guess I would rather be a banker, for I am sure Kenton would like that best."

Rupert often told his father that he would never care to be an earl; that he would sooner not be an earl than to be one. And he said when Lord Ross died, he would much rather that poor young man who had gone to the Indies should have the earldom than he. Lady Ross could hardly bear the

thought of this. She said when Lord Ross died she wanted Rupert and no one else to be earl; that she would very likely not be living at that time, but if she were not, she wished Rupert to be a lord, and then Rupert would say, "But, mamma, I really do not wish to be an earl. I think people are much happier when they are poor, than when they are so rich. There is Kenton Lorrimer, he is happy all the time, just as happy as I, and see how poor he is."

"Yes," said Lady Ross, "and I suppose he is the one who is putting all these absurd notions in your head. I think you and Daphne have a perfect passion for such poor, low people." And then Daphne would chime in, "Why! mamma, how can you say that about Kenton, when he saved my life? I am sure if he is poor, that does not prevent his being good and kind. Why, I love him like a brother. I think almost as much of Kenton as I do of Rupert."

"Yes," Lady Ross replied, "that's what comes of you and Rupert being with the boy all the time. I told your father I did not like you and Rupert to be together so much."

"But, mamma," said Rupert, "Kenton Lorrimer is just as good as I am. He is as honorable as he is kind. I have never seen him do a mean thing. Of course, he cannot help being poor. And, mamma, please forgive me for saying this, but I think you are very ungrateful to Kenton."

"What! Rupert, tell your own mother she is ungrateful? You are a very impertinent child and you must not say such a thing again."

"Well, mamma, I am sorry if I said anything

rude. I am only telling you what I think about Kenton Lorrimer."

"I am grateful to the boy for saving Daphne's life," Lady Ross replied, coldly, "but that is no reason I should think him your equal. Your father offered him money for his trouble, which I think was sufficient, without offering him our friendship. It really makes my heart ache to see you and Daphne so taken up with the boy."

Daphne would not stay to hear Kenton censured any longer and went to practice on a new ballad which she meant to play for him the next time he came to the Hall. She did love to sing and play for him, and see his eyes sparkle with pleasure. She thought he had the brightest, most expressive eyes she had ever seen. One moment they could be dim with tears and the next sparkling with fun. He would compliment her music and tell her she could sing like a mockingbird. This would please her very much, and she would tell him when she became a good musician, she meant to turn teacher and teach him. Kenton always thanked her and told her he thought she should find it a very tiresome task, but Daphne would tell him she was sure he could learn real fast, for he could sing as well as Rupert now. Kenton told her that Essie had often tried to teach him how to play, but he was such a "booby" she did not have very good success, but that he knew Daphne would make such a darling teacher he could not help learning a little at least. And Daphne would laugh and tell him he must not turn flatterer, that if he did she should not teach him at all.

CHAPTER XI

Kenton had been working at the bank some three months when one evening as he was going to his boarding place, he saw a street Arab snatch a little flower girl's purse and run with it. Kenton gave chase, and taking the purse from the boy, he told him he needed a good thrashing, and if he were not so small, he, Kenton, would give it to him. And after telling him never to be guilty of anything like that again, Kenton returned the purse to the little girl, who was weeping bitterly. "Don't cry, little girl," said Kenton, kindly, "for I have taken your purse from the little ruffian. It was very wicked in him to snatch it from you."

The little girl dried her eyes and looked up at him and said, "Oh! I am so glad, for if I had lost it Mrs. Miller would have beat me very hard."

"How glad I am that I came along then," he said. "But who is Mrs. Miller?"

"She is the woman I live with."

"And what is your name?" he asked, "and where do you live?"

"My name is Dorothy Donald and I live over on Decker street."

"Why, that is the way I live, too," he said. "Suppose we walk on together and you tell me about yourself. You said Mrs. Miller would beat you; is she not good to you?"

"No," she replied, "she is far from good to me. She makes me work out all day and sell flowers, and

she takes the money and buys gin with it, and if I do not sell any, she beats me and says I am idle and good for nothing, when I am sure I sell all I can. She doesn't give me anything to eat except a little bread and milk, and sometimes I get so hungry I can hardly walk the streets and carry my basket. I sometimes think I would not care if I should die."

"Are you hungry now?" Kenton asked.

"Yes," she replied; "I am very hungry, I have not eaten anything since early this morning, and not much then."

"Well," said Kenton, "here is some money and you must buy you a good meal with it."

"No," she said, "there is no need to give me any money, for Mrs. Miller would take it from me, and I would rather you would keep it than to have her get it."

"Well, I will tell you what to do," he said. "There is a restaurant down the street here, and you just come along down there and we will get a good, substantial meal."

"No," she said, "I should like to ever so much, but if Mrs. Miller should ever find it out, she would scold me."

"But she won't know," he said. "So come along."

He finally persuaded her to go, and ordering some coffee and meat and potatoes, he told her to sit down and eat. She did, eating as if she were nearly famished. When she had finished, they left the restaurant and Kenton asked her why she stayed with Mrs. Miller, if she was not good to her.

"I would not stay with her if I had any other place to stay."

"How came you to be with this wicked old woman?" Kenton asked. "Can you not remember your mother?"

"I can not remember very much about her?" she said. "But I have a kind of a memory of a woman with lovely gray eyes, who used to call me pet names. I suppose she must have been my mother. Mrs. Miller says she and my mother were living in the same tenement house together when mother was sick and that when she died, she asked Mrs. Miller to take care of me. She often tells me this and tells me I am ungrateful for all the trouble I have been to her. I can't see what trouble I have ever been to her. She doesn't work any, and what I earn would be enough to keep us in food if she did not spend it for drink."

"Poor little girl," said Kenton, compassionately. "I mean to come and see you some day. Maybe I can find you a better home. If I can I shall come for you? Would you go with me?"

"I would go with almost any one to get away from Mrs. Miller; and oh! I should be so glad to go. Do you really think you could find me a better home?" she asked, eagerly.

"Oh! I don't want to raise any false hopes," he replied. "I just said it was probable I might find you a better home, and I am sure I mean to try, for I like you, little girl."

"And I like you," she said. "I am sure you have

a kind heart, and I thank you ever so much for your kindness to me. What is your name?"

"My name is Kenton Lorrimer," he said. "I will write it down, and if Mrs. Miller drives you away, you just call at the Union Bank and ask for me and I will help you out some way."

"Thank you," she said. "You are very kind, but there is no danger of her driving me away so long as she can make me work for her."

They now came to a street corner and she stopped and said:

"I must go this way now. I think you had better not go any farther, for if she should see you with me, she would scold me. She doesn't like me to talk with any one. She seems to think I know some secrets of hers, and she is afraid I will tell."

"No," said Kenton; "maybe she won't see me, and I am afraid some bad little boy might get your purse after all, so I think I'll go with you."

"Well, we must not talk any more, then," she said, and they walked on in silence till they came to an old, dilapidated house which stood in a remote part of the city.

Just before they reached the gate, a rough-looking old woman came to the door, and looking down the street said angrily: "So here you are at last! What did you stay so late for?" and then looking at Kenton, she said, "And you've brought a beau with you! That is nice, now, I think," and, seizing her rudely by the arm, she pulled her in the house, asking her what she meant by such doings as that?

"Well, Mrs. Miller, a boy snatched my purse and

this boy took it from him and brought it back to me."

"Well, what of that? That was no reason why you should bring him all the way here."

"But, Mrs. Miller, he would come anyway, for he said he was afraid some one would take my purse after all."

"Now look here," she said, roughly, "I don't want this to happen again," and turning to Kenton, said: "We don't need any more of your service, and I'd thank you to go."

"Good-by, Dorothy," said Kenton. Raising his cap and turning, he left them, but when he had gone down the street a short distance he turned and watched them.

No sooner had Kenton gone than the old woman snatched the purse, and, emptying the contents in her hand, she threw the purse at Dorothy's head, and said: "You worthless little vagabond, is this all?" and pushing her rudely in, she slammed the door and started to the grog shop. The poor child went to sleep on a pile of straw in the corner, without any supper. But thanks to Kenton Lorrimer's kind heart, she was not hungry for once in her life.

Kenton was very much grieved over what the little girl had told him, and he began to ponder upon what he had told her about getting her a better home. He should not have told her his intentions, he thought, for now she would have some little hope and if he could not get a place for her then her hopes would be blighted. But could he get another home for her? Perhaps Mrs. Lynn, his landlady,

could take her. Then, when he thought about it, he knew she would not, for she had three little girls of her own. Then the thought came to him, what if his mother should be willing to take her to live with them? And as this was Friday, he resolved to ask his mother the very next day.

When he reached home the following night he told his mother of the poor little girl and asked her if she did not think they could take her?

"Why, Kenton," his mother replied, "how could we do that, as poor as we are?"

"I know that, mamma," he said, "but we are not one-half so poor as this little girl, and I am sure if you had seen how pitiable she looked, and how her face brightened when I told her I could possibly find her a better home, you would not hesitate to say she might come. Mamma," he said, desperately, "I did so want to go to school, but I'll give up going and give you the money to provide for her with."

Mrs. Lorrimer was kind-hearted, and when Kenton begged so earnestly she could hardly say no.

"I am willing and would be glad to help the poor child," she said, "but how can I, Kenton? We could not possibly do it, unless you gave up going to school, and I did so want you to go; but if you are willing, I suppose I cannot say no. But remember, if you do this, you must give up all hopes of going to school."

"I do hate to give up going," he said, "but when I think of that poor little girl, I do not mind so much. So I want to bring her with me next Saturday."

On the following Monday after Kenton was through with his duties at the bank, he went down Dexter street, thinking he might by chance see Dorothy. And sure enough, he did see her, with her little basket on her arm, making her way among the other dirty-looking little children of the street. He walked rapidly till he came up with her. She had her old flabby sunbonnet pulled down and she did not see him till he touched her on the arm.

"Hello! little girl, I did not have much trouble in finding you."

"Oh! It is you," she said, "is it?"

"Yes, it is I," he replied, "and I have some good news for you. I have found you another home."

"Another home," she repeated. "Another home? Oh! I'm so glad, so very glad," and she grasped his hand fervently.

"Yes," he said, "I have found you another home. My mother said you might come and stay with us."

"Stay with you?" she replied. "You, who have been so kind to me?"

"Yes," he replied. "My home is out from the city a few miles, near the village of Rossville, and you must meet me somewhere next Saturday evening. I will come for you and we will go right straight on to my mother's. Do you think you will have very much trouble in getting away from Mrs. Miller?"

"No, I don't think I will," she replied, "for she will be drunk, I suppose, as she is every Saturday evening."

"Well," said Kenton, "you wait for me here on

this corner, and I will be certain to come for you. If any one passes whom you know or who will be likely to know you, you must get out of the way before they see you."

"Yes, trust me for that," she said, "for if Mrs. Miller should find that I was trying to go away she would chase me and take me home and treat me worse than ever."

"Well, Dorothy," he said, "for your own future's sake, be careful, and do not act in any way that would lead her to think you mean to go away and leave her."

"Oh, I shall be careful," she replied, "very careful, and I shall be here at this corner next Saturday evening. But I must go now, for here of late when I do not get home as early as Mrs. Miller thinks I should, she comes down this way to see if there is any one with me. So good-by until next Saturday."

"Good-by," Kenton replied, "but do be careful."

Kenton knew that his hopes of going to school were past, but whenever he thought of how that little pale face brightened up at the thoughts of another home, he did not regret his decision. He waited impatiently for Saturday to come so as to get the poor child away from that cruel old woman whom she called Mrs. Miller. He believed there was some mystery about this little girl and he thought perhaps the old woman had stolen her. He saw at a glance that the girl had a refined face and he thought that if she had the proper training, she would some day make an intelligent and lovely

woman, and that his mother and Essie were the very ones who could make her such a woman.

So when Saturday evening came, he went down to the corner where Dorothy had promised to wait for him. He found her there and bidding her come with him, they started to the depot. The child seemed to be frightened out of her wits. Kenton asked her the cause of this, and she replied, "I am so afraid Mrs. Miller will see us and carry me back to that dreadful place."

"I don't think there's any probability of this," Kenton replied. "And if we should see her coming, we could dodge around a corner. Did you leave her at home?"

"No," she replied. "She took the money from me and went to the grog shop, and that is one reason why I am afraid she will see us, for we are liable to meet her at any moment."

"Well, we can at least hope we may not," he replied, cheerfully.

"Oh!" she cried. "Look! There she is! What can we do? There is no corner here for us to dodge around, and she will take me home with her and I cannot get away from her any more," and looking down the street Kenton saw the old woman coming along, tottering a little as she walked.

Kenton hardly knew how to act, but he was determined that Dorothy should not go back. It was but a little way up the street to a corner, but to reach it they must go right toward the old woman. But this was their only chance of escape, for if they should turn about she would overtake them before

they could possibly reach the corner. So catching hold of Dorothy's hand, Kenton told her they must run. And run they did. But the old woman had seen them and was trying to run toward them, shouting at the top of her voice, "Oh! Ye little vagabonds! You thought you'd get away from me, did you? I have been expecting this all along. What do you think you are going to do? There's that beau of yours, that you brought home with you the other day. When I get you home I'll pay you for this."

The old woman was rapidly gaining on them, and Kenton was beginning to think she would overtake them, in spite of all their efforts. Just as they reached the corner the old woman reached it too, and putting out her long, bony arm, she attempted to seize Dorothy as she passed, but just as she put out her hand to catch her, she lost her footing, fell and rolled over in the gutter. A policeman now hurried up to them and, seizing Kenton by the shoulder, demanded the cause of the disturbance.

"Hold on to him!" the old woman shouted. "He is trying to steal my little gal," as she managed to gain her footing, and started toward Dorothy.

"Run, Dorothy," shouted Kenton, "run for your life."

"Hold your tongue," the old woman said, snappishly, "you little ruffian! To try to steal a poor old woman's only child!"

"She is not yours," Kenton replied, but the old woman did not hear him, she was so bent on overtaking the child. She ran after her and seizing her

rudely by the hair, she gave her a vigorous box on the ear.

"You ungrateful little fool, I'll give you full pay for this," and seizing her by the arm she dragged her back up the street to where the policeman and Kenton were standing.

"Hand-cuff him," she said. "He is a thief. He tried to take my little gal from me."

"Oh! thank you, sir," Dorothy cried, gratefully. "Please let us go; he is so kind to me, and Mrs. Miller is so very unkind."

"Shut up," the old woman interrupted, "if you can't say anything but lies."

"They are not lies," the little girl sobbed; "it is all true."

"Hush, I tell you," and she had lifted her hand to strike the child, when the policeman seized her uplifted arm.

"Not so fast, if you please. Let the child tell why she was trying to get away from you. Perhaps she had good reasons. I think from your looks now, and the strong smell of liquor about you, that she did have a very good cause."

"Oh! thank you, sir," Dorothy cried, gratefully. "Mrs. Miller was so very unkind to me and would beat me so that I could hardly bear the blows, and I never have enough to eat. Mrs. Miller makes me work all day, and then when night comes she takes all the money and spends it for drink, and when I cannot sell my flowers, she beats me and says I am idle, and sends me to bed without anything to eat. When I am sure I have always sold

all I could, and carried her every cent of the money."

"All lies, every one of them," the old woman interrupted. "Every one of them. I don't drink, sir, I—"

"Yes, I notice now that you don't drink," he said, grinning. "And I say for you to hold your tongue and let the child finish her story."

The old woman was silent and Dorothy continued: "And one evening when I was going home a boy snatched my purse, and this boy here took it from him and returned it to me, and when I told him how cruel Mrs. Miller was, he told me he would try to find me a better home. And so last Monday evening he told me to meet him down the street this evening, and he would take me to a better home. I had to slip off from her, for I knew she would not let me go, for she wants me to work for her. She never does any work herself."

"Well," said the policeman, releasing his hold upon Kenton, "I suppose I must let you all go, for I have a little girl at home and should she ever get in such hands as this poor little lass has, I should be very glad if some one would help her. And I think you are a good boy to take the little girl and get her a better home. So you all may go."

"Thank you," said Kenton, "and may God bless you."

"And," continued the policeman, turning to Mrs. Miller, "I will take you with me, and see how you will like a night in the station house, for being drunk and causing such a disturbance."

"Oh! mercy," cried the old woman, trying to free herself, "let the two conspirators go and take a poor old woman that never done any harm in her life."

"Yes," said the policeman, "if I were you I would ask for mercy. You had no mercy on this poor little child. And as for doing no harm, I don't think from your looks you have ever done anything else. You did harm a moment ago when you struck that poor little girl for trying to get away. I do not blame her for wanting to go. Come along with me without any further trouble."

She walked away, muttering curses on the heads of Kenton and Dorothy, and telling Dorothy if she ever should get her hands on her again she would not get away any more, and that she would give her full pay.

"I will never live with her any more," Dorothy said to Kenton. "I would die first." And the two then proceeded on their way to the depot.

CHAPTER XII

Kenton and Dorothy entered the waiting room of the depot and sat down to wait for the train to Rossville. After a while an old gentleman came into the room and seated himself opposite them. When his eyes fell upon Dorothy he gave a sudden start and murmured, "Can it be? No—no, I must be going mad to think such a thing." But it seemed as if he could not take his eyes from Dorothy's face. She did not notice him, but Kenton hardly knew what to make of the man's strange interest in Dorothy. He was on the point of asking the old gentleman if he knew anything concerning the little girl, when the train pulled in and they had to go. The last he saw of the old gentleman he had followed them to the door, and he watched them until they entered the train.

"Oh!" said Dorothy, with a sigh of relief, "I am so glad to get out of the way of that wicked old woman, and to know that she cannot trouble me any more."

"No," said Kenton, "she will never know what has become of you. She will never think of going out to Rossville to look for you. My! but wasn't it luck that the policeman arrested her? For likely as not if he hadn't she would have followed us, and given us a lot of trouble."

"Yes," Dorothy replied, "I do not wish Mrs.

Miller any harm, but I am glad she was arrested so as to not give us any trouble."

"Say! Dorothy," said Kenton, "did you notice that queer-looking old gentleman in the waiting room—the one who looked at you all the time?"

"No," she replied, "I did not notice him. I am glad I did not, for if he looked at me so very much, I should have been frightened. I would have thought Mrs. Miller had sent him to bring me back."

"But thank Providence, he did not interfere with us," Kenton replied.

It did not take long for them to reach Rossville, and then they walked to Kenton's home. Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie received Dorothy kindly and bade her sit down until after supper and then she could tell them about herself and the woman with whom she had lived. Mrs. Lorrimer soon had supper ready and Dorothy enjoyed the good wholesome meal. When she had finished, Dorothy wanted to help Mrs. Lorrimer clear away the supper dishes, but Mrs. Lorrimer told her to sit down and rest. She was not sorry to do this as she had walked the streets all day, selling flowers, and was very tired. She then told Mrs. Lorrimer all about herself and that lady soon discovered that she was a very bright little girl.

Kenton got up early the following morning so as to go over and tell Daphne and Rupert of his little friend, and they of course must go right over and see her. She seemed a little shy of them at first, but before they left she liked them very much.

"Why, Kenton," said Rupert, "that is a lovely

little girl and I will wager she makes an excellent woman one of these days."

"I am so glad you have brought her out to stay," said Daphne, "for now I shall have another play-mate."

And on the way home the two children talked of Dorothy Donald, and said they meant to go and see her real often.

"I am sure mamma will not want us to go," said Daphne, "and if she will not allow us, I shall be very sorry, for I like her ever so much."

Dorothy seemed very happy, when she had been with Mrs. Lorrimer a week or two, and seemed to be getting over her fear of Mrs. Miller's finding her. Every time Kenton came home, he would tell her that she grew prettier each time he saw her, and Dorothy seemed to think there was no one like Kenton—except Rupert Ross, whom she had grown to like very much.

She saw Rupert very often, but not Daphne. Lady Ross said if Rupert was so disposed, he could go to Mrs. Lorrimer's every day, but Daphne must not go; she would see to that herself. Daphne could hardly bear this. However, she could see Kenton every week for he could not go back to the city without seeing Daphne, and he would go over to the Hall each time he visited his mother.

One day Essie received another letter from Claude and in answering it, she told him about Kenton's luck of getting a situation so as to earn money to go to school, and how he gave up going to school to give his earnings to his mother to help keep the

little girl, the care of whom he had taken upon himself.

The year passed uneventfully and another Christmas came. Essie, as beautiful as ever, looked a little sad. Daphne was a lovely little girl almost fifteen and, as Kenton expressed it, "more beautiful than ever." Kenton had grown considerably and was now a tall, splendid-looking boy of something over seventeen, almost a man in size, if not in age. Rupert was a little taller but not so tall yet as Kenton, and Dorothy,—who would take this little girl of sixteen for the same little ragged, half-starved child of a year ago? She was very small for her age, but her brown wavy hair and beautiful gray eyes would cause a passerby to give her more than a passing glance. Daphne, who was very tall, said that she did not see why she could not stay small like Dorothy and she told Kenton, as a great secret, that she thought Rupert was half in love with Dorothy. Rupert was soon to leave for college, and Kenton was very much grieved that he could not go with him.

On going to the post-office one morning, Kenton received a letter from Uncle Roger. He did not break the seal until he reached home, and when he did so, what was his surprise when a bank note fell from the envelope? Uncle Roger wrote that, on hearing from Claude, what Kenton had done, he sent him this to spend for his education and promised to send the same amount again one year from that day.

Kenton was so overjoyed.

"Hurrah for Uncle Roger! I won't have to give up going to college after all! Wouldn't I like to get my arms about his dear old neck now. I should give him such a hug he would think a bear had fallen in love with him! Just look, Essie! See, Dorothy," he said, triumphantly, waving the bank note over his head. "I say I will not have to give up going to college after all." And going up to his mother he put his arms about her and gave her such a vigorous hug, she had to call Essie to take him away.

He then turned on Essie, and, after giving her a bear-like hug, he released her and started for Dorothy, who took refuge on the opposite side of the table.

"Oh, don't run, Dorothy," he said, "for I have hugged both mamma and Essie and I don't mean to slight my other sister just because she is so small."

So round and round the table Dorothy went with Kenton in pursuit.

"Good gracious, Dorothy," he exclaimed, breathlessly, "I really believe you could beat the fastest horse in England! I haven't seen you run so fast since the day old Mother Miller gave chase."

"Oh, Kenton, do leave off," she said. "I declare I can't run any more. But please leave me alone. I would as soon a bear would get me as you. You really should not impose on your little sister just because you are larger."

She begged so earnestly that Kenton let her off if she would promise to keep out of his way. He said that he was so very happy he was not responsible for his actions.

"Mother, have all my things ready," he said, "for I mean to go with Rupert after all. But I must write Uncle Roger."

And so, sitting down, he wrote a long letter to him, telling him he was the dearest uncle in the world and many other things which would be very pleasing to this old wandering uncle.

Early the next morning, he went over to tell Rupert the news. Rupert was almost as glad as Kenton."

"I declare, you are a lucky fellow," he said. "And I'll tell you I'm glad to have you go with me."

"No more so than I am glad to go," Kenton replied, "for the dearest wish of my life has been to go away to school."

Daphne did not like the idea of Rupert and Kenton both going away; she said it would be so very lonely.

"You will have us thinking we are of more importance than we really are," Kenton replied.

"No, no," she said, "you could not think that way, for you are all, and more than I say you are. But never mind, I am going away to school next year, and you will not be missed so much when I am gone, for of course I am the one that will miss you and Rupert most of all."

"You forgot mamma and papa and Mrs. Lorri-mer and Essie and Dorothy," said Rupert.

"Oh, they won't miss you so much as I will," she replied, "but of course I know that you would like to think you were missed by Dorothy."

"Dorothy will miss Rupert more than she will

me," Kenton said, "for she sees him nearly every day and she only sees me once a week."

When Kenton was ready to leave he told Daphne that he would come to bid her good-by before he left for college.

"Indeed I think you will," she replied, "you know it would never do for you to leave without coming to bid me good-by."

It did not take a week long to go by, and on the day before Rupert and Kenton were to leave, Kenton went over to the Hall, as he had promised Daphne he would do. When he told her good-by, he whispered, "I mean to write to you, Daphne, and if I do, will you answer my letters?"

"Certainly I shall," she replied. "I will answer every one of them."

"Thank you," he said. "You may look for a letter from me at most any time, for I shall be anxious to hear from you. But I must tell you good-by. Now be a good girl and do not fall in the river any more," he said, laughing, "for then I could not get those letters which I will enjoy so much."

"I shall try not to get drowned," she replied, laughing too, and then Kenton went home.

Rupert and Kenton left the following morning for Eton to be gone ten long months. It was with tearful eyes that Mrs. Lorrimer saw Kenton go. She was glad for him but she did not like the idea of not seeing her son again for so long.

But Lady Ross, when Rupert kissed her good-by, drew herself up haughtily, and said, coldly, "It displeases me very much, Rupert, to see you going

away with the Lorrimer boy. I fear he will lead you into something wrong."

"If I never do anything wrong until Kenton Lorrimer leads me to it, I'm sure I'll never do anything wrong," he replied stoutly, and left his mother weeping. She was weeping not because he was gone, but because Kenton had gone with him.

Mrs. Lorrimer soon received a letter from Kenton telling her how well he liked the place and how he did like to go to school. But he was, he said, beginning to want to see the folks at home. He told his mother to tell Essie and Dorothy to write to him and that he would have written to them at the time he did his mother, but was so busy with his studies he could not spare the time then. But he found he could spare the time to write to Daphne for she received a long letter from him.

During these days Essie spent much of the time in giving Dorothy lessons on the piano, and she was not quite so lonely now for Dorothy was an apt scholar, and got so that she could play almost as well as Essie. Essie had taught her to play the pieces which she had played for Claude and she would listen to Dorothy's exquisite young voice for hours and hours as she sang his favorites, and in imagination Essie felt that she was again by his side, listening to his loving voice.

He had been gone now a year and three months and it seemed to Essie a century and three years. Dorothy knew why Essie looked so sad, for Essie made her a confidant almost from the first and they had become as sisters. Mrs. Lorrimer was very

glad that she had let the girl come to stay with them for she was so light-hearted and gay that she was like a sunbeam. Dorothy often talked of Mrs. Miller and the wretched days she spent with her, and said that she would not be back with her for the world, and then she would laugh and tell over and over again about the way she and Kenton tried to pass the old woman and how comical she would have looked to any one who was not interested in the matter, when she rolled over in the gutter, and how kind the policeman was in letting them go. And she often wondered who the old gentleman could have been who stared at her so in the waiting room, for she remembered everything that happened that night.

CHAPTER XIII

Kenton and Rupert had been at Eton for eight months. Kenton was the most apt scholar of the two and one of the best in the whole school. He was a favorite with every one. His classmates thought there was no one in school like him. Rupert was also a great favorite.

It was now just two months until vacation and they could hardly wait for those two months to go by, they were so anxious to be at home again. They had received many invitations to spend vacation with their college chums, but would not accept any of them, for it would be difficult to tell which was the more desirous of getting home.

At home great preparations were going on for their return. Essie seemed to grow more light-hearted now as she thought that almost two of those weary years of waiting had gone. "It will not take that other year long to go by," she thought, "and then Claude will return, and I shall be happy once more." She was looking eagerly to the time when Kenton would be at home, for it did not seem nearly so lonely when he was at home. Dorothy could hardly wait for the days to go by for Kenton seemed as a very dear brother to her.

But those two long months had gone at last, and on the night they were to reach Rossville, Lord Ross met the boys at the station with the carriage, for he could not wait at home. Daphne would go with her father to meet them and when the train arrived at

last it seemed to Daphne that they had been waiting five hours, but of course had only been a few minutes. Kenton and Rupert stepped from the train and Daphne rushed into Rupert's arms with a glad cry of welcome. Lord Ross warmly grasped the hand of Kenton and as soon as Daphne could be released from her brother's arms, he turned to Rupert and welcomed him, while Daphne turned to Kenton.

"Oh, Kenton," she exclaimed, "what a splendid-looking fellow you have grown to be! Why, you are a lot handsomer than Rupert."

"Thank you," he replied, "but I say, Daphne, you really must not commence the flattering process before you have had a good look at me. Possibly I won't look so well when you have had a better look at me. But my, how pretty you look! I did not think when I left there was any room for improvement. And, Daphne," he whispered, still holding her hand, and giving it a little pressure, "how I enjoyed those letters! You can't imagine."

"And how I enjoyed yours you will never know," she replied, "for I cannot tell you. I was so very lonely without you and Rupert. And your letters would cheer me up."

Rupert told Kenton to take the back seat of the carriage with Daphne, as he wished to sit beside his father. Now, Rupert would have much preferred to sit with Daphne but he knew how glad Kenton would be to sit by her so he told him to sit there. They soon reached Mrs. Lorrimer's and Rupert would go in to see Mrs. Lorrimer and the girls. But

Kenton whispered to Daphne that Dorothy was the girl he wished to see for he talked of her the greatest part of the time while they were away.

It seemed that Mrs. Lorrimer would never release Kenton from her embrace. Dorothy was the first one that Rupert wished to meet. He clasped the hand which she held out rather shyly, and when he told her how well she looked she flushed and replied, "And you look just as fine, too. And Kenton, —my gracious! how handsome he has grown."

He was indeed handsome, with his brown wavy hair and blue eyes; and he and Dorothy would have very easily been taken for brother and sister. Essie seemed the saddest of the group, for these greetings brought to her mind another meeting,—a meeting that she would be so glad to experience. The first thing Kenton asked of Essie was when she had heard from Claude and what he had done towards getting wealthy? Essie told him when she received the last letter, but said that he did not say anything about getting rich, but said if things came out as he thought they would he would be home in one more year.

"And won't we be glad to see him," Kenton replied. "And Uncle Roger, is he coming with Claude?"

Essie replied that she did not know as Claude had not said.

"I do hope he will," Kenton replied, "for I would give the world to see Uncle Roger."

Rupert was at Mrs. Lorrimer's every day during their vacation and he would tell his mother that

Daphne just must go with him for he wanted to be with her every day, so the four young people enjoyed themselves very much. Essie did not take much part with them as she was always sitting alone with her thoughts. Kenton was always with Daphne and Rupert with Dorothy. Mrs. Lorrimer would watch them with pleasure until her gaze fell upon Essie sitting so silent and sad, and then she could but feel sad to think that Essie could not enjoy anything like the other four young people. And she sometimes thought it would have been best had Essie never met Claude.

One evening when Rupert and Daphne had been at Mrs. Lorrimer's, Rupert, who had been watching Essie intently as she sat with that sad look in her dreamy blue eyes, thought suddenly that they were causing all this. He resolved to tell his father that he never meant to be an earl and that he must bequeath the earldom to that young man for whom Essie was grieving her very life away.

Lord Ross was astonished and told Rupert that it would never do, for the earldom would come to the nearest relative at his death.

"But, papa, if I say I do not mean to take it, what then?"

"Yes, but you will not do this," Lord Ross replied.

"Yes, papa," Rupert replied, "that is just the thing I mean to do. I shall never be an earl, for Kenton and I are going in partners in business in a few years and I know I shall like that better than being an earl."

"Well, Rupert Ross!" his father said in blank consternation, "if that doesn't beat all I have ever heard of! Why is it that you are so anxious for this young man to take your place as earl?"

"Simply for this reason," replied the boy, "I have no desire to be an earl. I would be so much gladder to see this poor young man Lord Ross than to be that myself. And I say, papa, you can do as you choose in this matter, but I shall not accept the earldom, and I wish you to make your will and leave this to him. I do not say leave him any of your money; I only mean the title, for I do not want any title to my name."

"Well, Rupert," he replied, "you have some strange, strange notions. I declare I never saw the like of you, but of course I shall not do this, for you will probably change your mind when you grow older."

"No," Rupert replied, "I shall never change my mind in this. But, papa, if the day I am twenty I have not changed my mind will you do this?"

"Yes," the Earl replied, for he was sure that Rupert would not wish him to do this after he had thought upon the matter for that length of time.

"Thank you," Rupert replied, "for this promise, for on the day I am twenty I shall have the pleasure of seeing the title made over to this Claude Ross."

"Rupert, suppose I shall out-live this young man," the Earl said after a pause, "would you not accept the title then?"

"No," said Rupert, "I would not, I would let the title drop."

"What a strange lad to be sure," Lord Ross said, musingly.

And when Rupert had left the room, he murmured, "Strange indeed. Why, most boys in his position would not give up being an earl for all the world. But Rupert has always been a strange child. He has never had the ways and ideas of other children."

The winter snows now began to fall, and the four young people spent the time sleigh-riding or skating or in some other such amusement. The time was not far distant when Rupert and Kenton would have to return to Eton to continue their studies, and Daphne was going to leave for a young ladies' seminary in France. Dorothy said she did not see how she was to pass the time, she would be so lonely when they were all gone.

"How I wish you could go with me, Dorothy," Daphne said one day, when they were talking of the time when she should go. As she spoke she passed her arm around Dorothy lovingly.

"And I wish I could," Dorothy replied, "but I can not and there is no need to think of that."

"I wish I was rich, then you could," Kenton said—he was a listener to the above conversation. "I have often thought of your going to school and am sorry because I couldn't do this."

"Now, Kenton," Dorothy replied, "you have done an excellent part by me and I am perfectly satisfied

with what you have done, so do not let this grieve you."

"I have not done as good a part by you as I should like to, but I have done the best to my ability and I suppose that is all one can do."

"Yes," she replied, "it is all and enough. Just to think what circumstances I was in when you found me, and now what a happy home I have! I can live all my days out here with the utmost satisfaction just as I am. Don't you think Kenton is just the best brother in the world?" she said, turning to Daphne.

"Indeed I do," Daphne replied heartily. "I have thought him that ever since I first knew him. I think we are very lucky girls in possessing such good, kind and loving brothers as Kenton and Rupert, don't you, Dorothy?"

"Yes," Dorothy replied, "I think we have the very best brothers in the world."

Dorothy had long since learned to call Kenton brother, for he seemed as much to her.

Another Christmas has come and gone, bringing to Kenton another letter from Uncle Roger with the promised money, and Rupert and Kenton are again at Eton and in one more month Daphne is to leave for France.

When the time came for Daphne to leave, Lord Ross accompanied her and saw that she was properly settled and then returned to England. It was very lonely now at the Hall, for Daphne's sunny face and gay laughter were missed so much. It was also a sad parting, the parting between Daphne and

Dorothy, for they had grown to love each other very much. Daphne promised Dorothy that she would write to her very often, and when she had been gone a little more than a week Dorothy received a long letter from her telling her how she liked all the girls and that she would like it so much better if Dorothy was only there.

Lady Ross missed Daphne very much but was glad to get her out of the company of Dorothy Donald, whom this proud lady considered little higher than her own servants. She told Lord Ross that as both Daphne and Rupert were gone, and it was so very lonely they might as well travel a while, and the time would not seem so long. The Earl was willing, as he could hardly bear to remain at the Hall without his little Daphne. So they left in a few days, and the servants were not sorry for they were glad to have Lady Ross go, as they were not over-fond of her.

CHAPTER XIV

It was a lonely time for Dorothy and Essie, and then to think that even Lord and Lady Ross were gone. Though they were not very much company to Mrs. Lorrimer's little family when they were at home, it seemed lonely to think there was no one at the Hall but the servants.

As Dorothy had never been at the Hall, she and Essie went over one afternoon to see what a grand old place it was. Mrs. Sullivan, the housekeeper, showed them over the place and told them she was glad to see some sweet young faces once more; that since Daphne left the place was very lonely. Essie could not but remember the last time she was at the Hall, and the sad memory caused a deeper look of melancholy to come in her pale face.

"And your name is Dorothy Donald," Mrs. Sullivan said, looking intently at Dorothy. "Are you the Dorothy that Rupert and Daphne talked so much about? Why, Rupert was completely fascinated with you. And one day Daphne whispered to me that though you were both very young, she believed that you were in love with each other. Is this true?" she asked, smiling at Dorothy's agitation.

"No," said Dorothy, "I am sure Rupert would not love such a poor girl as I."

"Why, that is the very kind of girl Rupert likes," Mrs. Sullivan replied. "Rupert and Daphne both like poor people better than rich ones. They seemed to think almost as much of me as they did of their

own mother and would tell me all of their secrets. But of all the people I ever met, Lord Claude was my choice. I loved him as if he had been my own son. Why, what is the matter, Miss Lorrimer?" Mrs. Sullivan asked, for Essie had turned so pale that she thought she was going to faint. "Am I tiring you with my ceaseless chattering?"

"No, no," Essie replied quickly. "I am not in the least tired, but I have a very painful headache. Go on please and tell me about Lord Claude."

"He was just the kindest young man I have ever met," continued Mrs. Sullivan, "and it was hard on him when he had to leave. I think there must have been some girl he was grieved at leaving for I never saw him in such distress. He looked as if he was going mad."

How could she ever sit there and listen to that? Essie thought, when she was that girl. She longed to tell Mrs. Sullivan all, for she had a kind, motherly face, and besides this she, too, loved Claude. "But no," Essie thought, "I will not tell her." But she was afraid lest the loud beating of her heart would be heard and betray her secret.

Mrs. Sullivan talked on and on, never tiring, until Essie told her that they really must go, then Mrs. Sullivan told them they must come again, and she asked them if they were fond of reading. They replied that they were, and then she told them they must come over to the Hall every day and read some of those splendid books in the library. They thanked her and told her as they were so lonely at times that they would be very glad of this oppor-

tunity. And they did go to the Hall very often, and then it did not seem so lonely as it had.

One day Essie was reading a very pathetic love story when she came upon her own name written with a pencil in Claude's writing, and she knew by this that he had been reading the same book, and then over on the next page she discovered in the same writing these words: "God bless my little Essie." And she knew that the story had in some way reminded him of her. Then she fell to thinking of Claude and, laying the book aside, she burst into tears, and said to Dorothy, "I have a presentiment, Dorothy, that Claude is not coming back so soon as we were expecting him. And, oh, if he should not!" Laying aside her book, Dorothy arose and going over to Essie, she put her arms about her neck and kissed her tenderly.

"Essie, do not think of such a thing. Try to think he is coming. Let every day take care of itself and do not borrow trouble."

"I really can not help it, Dorothy, dear," she replied. "I have tried to be happy and cheerful and I can not. Just at the time I think I am becoming accustomed to his absence such a wild longing to see him takes possession of me that it seems I will almost die."

"But, Essie," said Dorothy, "he promised to be back at the end of three years at the very longest. A little more than two of those years are already gone and you can surely wait one more year! And then this handsome lover of yours will return. I am just dying to see him, for I know he is noble

and good, or you would never love him as you do. I sometimes imagine I can see how he looks, and when he returns I shall see if I have pictured him out in my mind correctly."

"Dorothy," said Essie, drying her eyes, "you are the dearest little comforter on earth. I sometimes think were it not for you I should die of grief, but you are always ready with a bright smile and a word of cheer,—a real little sunbeam in my darkened, lonely life."

"I am glad if I can be of any comfort to you," she replied, "for I should like to repay you in some way for your kindness to me."

"You have repaid me a thousand times," Essie replied, "for the little I have ever done for you."

Essie and Dorothy continued to go to the Hall almost every day, until one day Mrs. Sullivan informed them that Lord and Lady Ross were expected at any time and then they left off going. In a few days Lord Ross came over to Mrs. Lorrimer's to tell her that on the way home they had come by way of Eton and, as he thought she would be glad to hear how Kenton was doing, he came over to tell her. She thanked the Earl, telling him he was very kind to take this trouble and she would certainly be glad to hear from Kenton.

"He is doing just as well as one could expect," he said. "He is going ahead of Rupert in his studies and the professors give him a good reputation. But he gets that name wherever he goes. Mr. Eperson, you know, the president of the bank where Kenton worked, did not like the idea of giving him up at

all as he was such an excellent lad and attended to his duties so thoroughly. Kenton bade me give you and his two sisters his best love and tell you he was doing well, enjoying good health and that he would be glad when he could be at home once again."

"And I will be glad when he can be at home again," Mrs. Lorrimer replied, "for we do miss him so much."

"Yes," Lord Ross replied, "I know you miss him a great deal, for it hardly seems like the same place at the Hall since Rupert and Daphne went away. But you should not be so lonely as Marie and I, for you have some young people with you yet. Daphne says that Miss Dorothy is as lively as a kitten and no one could be lonely when they were with her."

"Yes," Mrs. Lorrimer replied, "Dorothy is the light of our home, but still we cannot but miss Kenton; it seems that I shall never become accustomed to his absence."

Here a deep sigh was heard, and looking over to the other side of the room, Mrs. Lorrimer saw Essie with her hands folded idly in her lap, gazing out the window toward the east, with that same sad look in her eyes.

When Mrs. Lorrimer said that she could never become accustomed to Kenton's absence, Essie thought of that other absent one, so many miles away. A cloud of sadness passed over Mrs. Lorrimer's face when she saw that her words caused Essie pain, and Dorothy also noticed Essie's grief and rising, she went over to her and suggested that they go for a walk. She always tried to think of

something to take Essie's mind from that absent one.

Essie assented. And taking up their hats, they went down the road, walking very slowly. And Dorothy soon succeeded in getting Essie to talk of something else, even if she was still thinking of Claude.

When they reached home again, Lord Ross had gone and, going over to the piano, Dorothy commenced a lively little "ditty," and soon had Essie laughing, which difficult thing she succeeded in doing only once in a great while.

CHAPTER XV

The long three years were over at last, and Claude was expected home very soon. Rupert, Daphne and Kenton had returned home and Essie had grown very happy as the time came for his return. But on this particular day she and Dorothy had been to the post-office and Essie received a letter. Looking at the writing she recognized it as her lover's.

"A letter from Claude! Why, Dorothy, I was not expecting this," she said. "I half fear that something has gone wrong, for he told me in his last letter not to look for any more letters for he would be home by the time another letter could reach me. I'm half afraid to open this, for I fear something dreadful has happened."

"Oh, Essie," Dorothy replied, "don't fear anything of the kind. Probably he is on his way now and sent this to tell you when he could reach here. Do look,—where was it posted? I am sure he is on the way home now."

Essie looked at the letter and replied, "No, Dorothy, it was posted in the Indies."

And she who had watched and waited so impatiently for the coming of Claude's letters was almost afraid to open this for fear of bad news.

"Do read it, Essie dear," said Dorothy, "and tell me when this wonderful lover of yours will reach here. I'm growing impatient to hear when

he is coming. Why, it looks very much like you are not glad to hear from him."

"Well, I must confess, Dorothy, that I would be gladder to see Claude than the letter. I can not tell why, but I have a dread of reading this letter, something seems to whisper in my ear, 'this letter contains bad news.'"

"That is all imagination, Essie."

"Possibly it is," she said, "but I am going to wait until I reach home before I read it."

"Why, Essie, you have never done anything like this before. The very speediest way you could open the letter was too slow for you and now you say you mean to wait until you reach home. Why, Essie, I am amazed at you."

But nothing Dorothy could say would induce Essie to open the letter. When they reached home Dorothy said to Mrs. Lorrimer, "What do you think, mamma, Essie has received a letter from Claude and she has not read it nor can I persuade her to read it."

"Why, Essie," Mrs. Lorrimer said, "why do you not read the letter?"

"Well, I do mean to read it now that I am at home, but I am sure it contains bad news."

"Let us hope that it does not," Mrs. Lorrimer replied.

"I have been hoping that all the way home," she replied, "but still I can not but think it is as I say."

Going to her room, she sat down and broke the seal, then the fear became stronger than ever and she murmured, "Oh, God, if it does contain any-

thing dreadful, help me to bear it," and then she unfolded the paper and began to read.

As she read a deadly pallor settled over her face, and her hands trembled violently, and when she had finished reading one page, the letter fell from her nerveless fingers.

"Oh, heaven help me, it is as I feared!" she cried and fell forward onto the floor.

* * * *

When Essie did not return to the sitting room Dorothy remarked, "I wonder what Essie can be doing all this time? Why, she has had time to read that letter over a half dozen times."

"I can not imagine what she can be doing," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "Perhaps it would be well for you to look in and see."

"That is what I mean to do," she replied, and going to the door she knocked, but no gentle voice bade her "come in."

"Essie," she called, but there was no answer.

Then when she pushed the door a little ways open and looked in, what was her surprise and horror to see Essie lying prone and helpless on the floor. With a little scream of fear she cried, "Oh! mamma, come here, a dreadful thing has happened."

Mrs. Lorrimer ran to Dorothy and said, "What has happened, child?"

"Do look, mamma," she said, pushing the door farther open so as to make room for Mrs. Lorrimer, "Essie has fainted."

"Oh, mercy," Mrs. Lorrimer exclaimed, "the child was surely right in her foreboding. There

was something dreadful in that letter. She has never fainted before in all her life. Here Dorothy, help to lift her up," and between them the two women lifted her and placed her on the bed. Then they began to apply restoratives, and after they had worked with her a while she slowly opened her eyes, and seeing Mrs. Lorrimer and Dorothy standing over her, she said, "What is the matter? Oh, I remember now. Oh, that I might die," and again fainted.

"Dorothy," said Mrs. Lorrimer, "run and send Kenton for the doctor. He has gone over to the Hall."

Dorothy started, but had gone only a little way when she met Kenton.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, "Kenton, go for the doctor and hurry up. Essie has fainted and as soon as she recovers from one spell she falls into another! Do hurry up, Kenton. Mamma is frightened almost to death."

"Dorothy, tell me what is the matter with her?" he said. "What caused it?"

"We do not know, Kenton," she replied, "only that she got a letter from Claude and went to her room to read it and she stayed so long we became uneasy and I went to see why she stayed so long. I knocked and knocked and called her by name and still there was no answer. This frightened me, and pushing open the door I looked in and saw Essie lying on the floor in a faint. Kenton, do hurry, for the love of heaven!" and then she turned and ran back to the house.

When Dorothy reached the house Mrs. Lorrimer was still standing over Essie doing all in her power to bring her out of her swoon.

"Has she not recovered yet, mamma?" Dorothy asked.

"She comes out of one swoon only to fall into another," Mrs. Lorrimer replied. "And oh! Dorothy, I fear she will not get over it. If she should not, what would we do?"

"Mamma, mamma, don't say that," Dorothy replied. "I really could not bear that.

In a little while Kenton returned with the doctor, who went to work with a will, but it was some time before he could do Essie any good.

"Oh, let me die!" she whispered. "I want to die, for I know I can not live any longer without him."

"What can the child mean?" Mrs. Lorrimer said, sadly, "she 'can not live without him.' Dorothy, get that letter and read it. See what is the cause of this."

She obeyed, and when she had read down to the place where Essie had stopped she laid the letter down and said, "I have found the reason, mamma. Claude is not coming after all. He says just as he was ready to start for England, the very night before he was to start, he was robbed of all his money and now he must start over again. He says he can not tell when he would see England."

"Little wonder that the poor child fainted. It is dreadful," Mrs. Lorrimer said, sadly. "It seems there is a cruel fate against Essie and Claude."

The old doctor looked amazed but asked no ques-

tions. He went on with his work and he finally, when Elsie slept, turned to Mrs. Lorrimer. "It is right that I should tell you that your daughter is in a serious condition. I fear that brain fever will set in."

"Oh, Doctor, don't tell me that," she said; "don't tell me my darling is going to die."

"I don't wish to raise any false hopes," he said. "It is just possible she may recover, but I will tell you this much, it will require the most skilful nursing. It is better for you to know her exact condition, so you can be the more careful with her. She must see no one except her nurses. I suggest that Miss Dorothy and yourself nurse her. As I have done all I can possibly do for her, I must go now. I will come again to-morrow," and, bowing, the old doctor left the room.

It was some time after the doctor had gone that Essie awoke and then she was delirious. When old Doctor Hathaway came the next day, he shook his head knowingly and murmured to himself, "Poor girl! I have never seen any one any worse from the start. Poor girl, poor girl, if I only could save you!" He shook his head again sadly.

"It is as I feared, the fever has set in," he said to Mrs. Lorrimer. "She must not know this though. Do not let her suspect that she is very ill. The best thing to do is to get her to think she will recover in a few days. Another thing that is against her, she does not want to get well."

The days went by and Essie did not seem to get any better. She tossed restlessly and talked about

Claude all the time. Sometimes it was evident that she thought she was talking with the robber, who stole Claude's money, for she would say, "Go away, oh, go away! Do not taunt me with that horrible face of yours. You stole his money and kept him from coming back to me! You have killed me—you have killed me! Now you follow me to taunt me! Go away, go away!"

Then her face would assume a most frightened look and she would put out her hand feebly and try to push some one away from her. Then it seemed she was thinking Claude had come back, for she would say so softly and loving, "Oh, you have come back to me, my darling, in spite of all! That wicked man got your money and has been tormenting me and telling me you would never come, but you did come, didn't you, dear? We do not care for the money, we will be happy without it, and that is enough." Then she would laugh wildly. "That wicked man killed me, but you have come to me, and I do not care if he did. We can be together now and the want of money will never separate us again." She would talk this way an hour or so and then would fall into a deep sleep.

Mrs. Lorrimer and Dorothy could hardly bear this and would weep bitterly. Kenton was almost frantic with grief. The doctor would allow no one in the sick room but the nurses; even Kenton could not go in, and he could hardly endure it. He walked the floor from morning to night and each time the doctor came he asked eagerly if she were not just a little better? And the old doctor would answer

sadly, "No, my lad, no better, and I fear she will never be." Then Kenton would continue his pacing up and down, until Dorothy would persuade him to lie down and try to get a little rest.

Every day Lord Ross, Rupert or Daphne called to see how Essie was but of course they did not see her. Daphne either sent or brought a beautiful bouquet from the conservatory every day. Kenton answered Claude's letter and told him of her illness and what caused it, at the same time telling him how grieved he was at hearing of his (Claude's) misfortune, and that he would be glad to welcome him back to England at the earliest possible date.

* * * *

One would hardly recognize the pale, haggard-faced man sitting by a table reading a letter as the self-same strong, hopeful man who left Rossville Hall some three years ago. He was as handsome as ever, but there was a settled look of sadness on his handsome face, a look of disappointment and grief. He read steadily on until he read the very last word. He then passed the letter over to a man who sat on the other side of the table.

"See, Uncle Roger, what I have been the means of doing. What a miserable wretch I am!"

Uncle Roger took the letter, and after reading it, passed it back to Claude.

"That girl loved you, my boy, more than all the world, and if you have lost her, you have lost a priceless pearl. Perhaps she is dead by this time. If she has, Claude, you at least know you have two angels in Heaven waiting for you, your sainted

mother and little Essie. O God, spare her!" he moaned, and the tears began to trickle down the old man's cheeks. "Spare little Essie to her lover and her poor old Uncle Roger, so far away from dear old England."

Claude was too stricken with grief to speak, but bowed his head and wept. After a while he raised his head and said, "Oh, Uncle Roger, if my little Essie has gone I do not want to live, either. My little darling, how can I live out a whole lifetime without her?"

And again those words that Essie had spoken the day he last saw her came back to him with full force, "If we should never meet again."

"Oh! merciful Heaven," he murmured, "from Kenton's letter I fear it will be that way and it will be so long before I can hear again. But Kenton said in his letter he would write again after the crisis and tell me if she was dead or living. Oh, God!" he said, brokenly, "do not let my little Essie die. And to think I have caused all this. If she is dead, I shall feel that I am her murderer."

"No, no, lad, don't talk that way," said Uncle Roger, "if it be God's will for her to die young she would have died had she never met you."

"God bless that little Dorothy who watched over her so constantly," murmured Claude, "and may His richest blessings rest on her, for her kindness to my blessed little angel."

"Claude," said Uncle Roger, "God in all His mercy will surely leave us little Essie. Let us hope

and pray that He will. Claude, I am sure if we ask Him, He will spare her to us."

"But, Uncle Roger," he said, "we may be too late for she may be gone long before this."

"If she has it is fate," he replied, "but I say, let us hope that she is not dead."

"Oh, Uncle Roger," he said, "I am too wretched to hope; I am too wretched to live! If Essie is dead I shall never go back to England. I will stay right here until I die."

"But, Claude, if our little Essie is gone," said Uncle Roger, sadly, "there is a time coming when we can meet her again in a world where poverty can not part you. No sickness or death enter there."

"Uncle Roger," said Claude, "that is a blessed hope, is it not? But to think of the long, weary years here on earth. It is probable that I may live to be a very old man and if I should you know what an utterly wretched life it would be with no little Essie. Oh! what would I not give to be in England tonight to see that beautiful little face once more. Kenton said the doctor had but little hope for her and she must indeed have been very ill. If I knew I could reach her before she dies I would leave for England this very night. There is a steamer ready to start, and oh, if I only thought I could reach her, I would go."

"No, Claude," said Uncle Roger, "it would be folly for you to go, for if she should get well you remember the fortune you wish to lay at her feet, and if you go you can not do this. If she is dead

it is too late for you to go. My advice is that you do not go."

"Uncle Roger," Claude said, persistently, "if I knew I could reach her before cruel death does, I would go though I should never see any more money."

"It would be folly for you to go."

"Well, Uncle Roger," Claude replied, "it shall be as you say. I will not go, but it seems that something whispers in my ear, 'Go, go, before it is too late.'"

"But possibly, lad, it is too late now," was the reply. "But let us ask the Father to spare her to us."

So kneeling down, the two men sent up a prayer to heaven for Essie's life.

CHAPTER XVI

Two long months passed and Essie did not recover nor did she seem to be very much better. One night Dorothy persuaded Mrs. Lorrimer to lie down for a little rest. There was no one in the room but Dorothy. When Essie opened her eyes Dorothy saw that she did not have the vacant stare into empty space that they dreaded so much to see. She gazed long and earnestly at Dorothy.

"Why am I so weak, Dorothy? I can hardly raise my hand."

"You have been very ill," Dorothy replied, "but you are better now and will be well again in just a few days."

"No, Dorothy," she said, "I don't think I shall ever be well any more. I am going to die, Dorothy dear. I am almost sure I shall."

"Oh, no," Dorothy replied. "You must not talk that way. It only makes you more nervous. You will not die. The doctor says there will be a change in your condition in one or two days and, of course, this change will be for the better."

"Oh, Dorothy, where is my hair?" she asked. "My hair that Claude always called so beautiful."

"We had it cut off, Essie, dear, so you would get well. I think you had better not talk any more now."

"I am no better,—it,—it can't hurt me," Essie continued. "Dorothy, you know where Claude's picture and all his letters are, do you not?"

"Yes," she replied.

"Go get them," said Essie.

"What? You are not going to try to read them, are you?" Dorothy asked in amazement.

"No, no," she replied. "I could not if I should try. I want you to read them to me."

"No, Essie," Dorothy replied; "that will never do. I will get his picture for you; you are too weak to listen to them. Wait a few more days until you are stronger, then I will read them for you."

"Very well," she said, sadly, "but in a few more days I will not be here. I am almost sure I will not."

"Don't talk so, Essie," said Dorothy, as she arose to get the picture. She brought it to her and Essie gazed at it for a long time, then pressing the picture to her lips, murmured, "And to think I must go and leave you! But God's will, not mine, be done."

With a weary sigh, she closed her eyes and fell asleep, with the picture pressed close to her heart.

When she awoke Mrs. Lorrimer was in the room. Dorothy had told her that Essie had seemed a little better, but she did not tell her how she had been talking, for she knew it would trouble her immeasurably.

Essie was very quiet all that night, and when the doctor came the next day he found her asleep. Mrs. Lorrimer told him she had seemed quieter and better and he would not let her be wakened. But when he was ready to go Dorothy went with him to the door and told him what Essie had been saying about dying.

The old doctor shook his head again, as he always did when he was anxious, and said, "A bad symptom, Miss Dorothy, a bad symptom. I fear this trouble is not yet over."

That evening Mrs. Lorrimer left the room awhile and Dorothy was with Essie when she awoke.

"Dorothy," said Essie, "I am glad we are alone, for I would not tell mamma. I did not want to put any more trouble on her than she has already. But I mean to tell you, Dorothy, for you are more able to hear me out than mamma would be. Please do not interrupt me while I am telling you. Will you promise me this?"

"Yes," Dorothy replied.

"I am going to die, Dorothy. I shall never see my Claude again in this world. I wish to send him many loving messages, and I am sure you will deliver them for me. Will you, dear?"

"Yes," she replied. "I shall tell him word for word. But, Essie, I say you will not die. God, in all His mercy, will not take you from us."

"Dorothy, you promised to not interrupt me, and please do not any more."

"Forgive me, Essie," Dorothy sadly said. "I will not do so again."

"I do not mind death in the least, Dorothy, but I do hate so much to leave mamma and Kenton and you, my dear little sister, for you have indeed been all a sister could be. And oh! Dorothy, it is dreadful to die without seeing Claude again! But as

he said, 'We will meet again in Heaven.' But how I should like to live to see him come back and have him make me his wife. Tell him how I wished this, Dorothy, and tell him, too, that I was not afraid to die, and that I am sure I shall meet his mother in Heaven, and that dear little sister of whom he talked so much. I shall tell them what a good boy our Claude is—for of course they have a very dear claim on him, too. And I shall tell them I loved him. Tell him I remained true to him and loved him more each day of my life. Take that lily in the box with his letters and give it to him. He gave it to me, Dorothy, one day long ago—oh, it seems so very long ago! I was happy then, as happy and light-hearted as you are, Dorothy. But it was our destiny to be parted, and I must not complain. Give him the lily, dear, and tell him it is the last gift from his little Essie. And tell him always to keep my picture and that little curl as mementoes of the time when he loved a little girl in old England, and when he looks at the curl to remember it was the day before he left me I gave it to him. Oh! Dorothy, how can I die when I have so much to live for. I did not want to get well at first, but I do now, for I know Claude will be grieved when he hears that I am dead. I do not want him to be grieved. And tell him, Dorothy, that when I am gone and another takes my place, will he not sometimes look at my picture and think of his first love, who will then be sleeping in the old church-yard. And tell him I hope that other one will make as

faithful and loving a wife as I should have always tried to be. Tell him his name shall be the last on my lips. And Dorothy, bury his picture and letters with me and the little ring he gave me. Tell him that I watched for his coming, only I watched in vain, and that I know that his love is still true. Tell him, Dorothy, I loved him to the last, and then give him my last farewell. And now, Dorothy, draw aside the curtain, please, so that I may see the sunset. What a glorious sunset," she murmured, "I wonder if Claude is watching this same sunset. See, Dorothy, the sun is almost gone—so is my life. It is sinking with the sun. Before that same sun rises again, I think I will not be here to watch it."

She watched the sun till the last crimson ray had faded from the west. "Gone, so will I be tomorrow," then slowly closed her eyes and fell asleep.

When she awoke again she was delirious.

Kenton started for Doctor Hathaway, as Mrs. Lorrimer feared Essie was growing worse. When the old doctor arrived he told Dorothy that he thought the crisis would come in a very short time, and that he could allow no one in the room and that he must ask that she and Mrs. Lorrimer go away, and when she awoke she must not see any one except him. They left the room and the old doctor was left alone with his patient. Slowly the hours dragged by. The house was as silent as the tomb. Dorothy sat by Mrs. Lorrimer's side holding her hand in her own warm grasp, and tried to comfort the heart-broken mother. Slowly the hours went

by, and it seemed an eternity to the anxious ones in waiting.

The doctor sat by Essie's bedside holding his fingers on her feeble pulse, with an open watch in the other hand, counting each of the feeble beats. It was nearly midnight. Essie continued in the same way. At last the pulse beats are a little faster, then a little stronger, the old doctor holds his breath in anxiety. The pulse grows a little stronger at each beat, the doctor has a little hope yet. Finally the blue eyes flash suddenly open, then she closes them again and falls into a deep sleep.

"She will live," muttered the old doctor. "She will live."

He went to Mrs. Lorrimer, and shaking a warning finger at her to keep from making any outcry, he said, "Praise God, Mrs. Lorrimer, she will live!"

"Thank God! Oh! thank God for all his mercy! I did not think He would take my child from me; and I must thank you, too," she whispered, grasping the doctor's hand in both her own. "For had it not been for your careful watching, I do not know what the result might have been."

"Will she get well?" said Kenton, coming into the room softly.

"Yes," he replied, "with care she will."

"She shall have that," said Dorothy.

"Yes," said Doctor Hathaway, "I think you owe your daughter's life to Miss Dorothy, Mrs. Lorrimer. She is the best nurse I know to be so young.

But I must return to Essie, for it is probable that she may awake. I advise you all to lie down and sleep the rest of the night."

"I can lay down to rest, but I don't think I can sleep—I am too happy to sleep," said Dorothy.

"Oh! thank Heaven that she did not die," murmured Kenton. "Now, mother, see what a blessing our little girl has been to us; the doctor said you owed Essie's life to Dorothy's careful nursing."

"No, it was not that," said Dorothy. "It was God's will. Had it been His will for her to die, all of my nursing would not have saved her."

On the following morning Essie was very much better and the doctor said she would be quite well now in a few weeks.

Kenton was allowed to go in and see her, the first time since her illness. He was prepared to see her thin and pale, but he was not prepared to see her fallen away and so wasted as she was. She was asleep and Kenton did not speak to her. He lingered in the room as long as the doctor would allow him to, then he went to his room and, as he promised, he wrote a letter to Claude, telling him that Essie would recover.

Words cannot express the joy with which this letter was read by Claude and Uncle Roger. They laughed and cried by turns, all the while thanking God for His goodness and mercy.

"I told you, my boy, that God would spare her if we would ask Him in good earnest," said Uncle Roger, "and now you see He has. It will require a

lifetime of work in His behalf to praise Him for this."

"And that is just the thing I mean to do the rest of my life," Claude replied. "But if I should live to be a thousand years of age and work for God all that time, I could never repay Him half for saving this precious life. Oh! if she had died, what would have become of me? As I told her once long ago, I don't think I should have been long in following her to that long resting place."

CHAPTER XVII

Two weeks had elapsed since the crisis in Essie's illness. Under Dorothy's watchful care Essie was slowly recovering. One day Dorothy was sitting by her bedside and they were talking of that evening Essie thought she was going to die. "Yes, Essie," said Dorothy, "you thought you were going to die, when I told you all along you would not."

"But, Dorothy, I could not help thinking that way," Essie replied, with a vain attempt at a smile. "I was just as sure that I was going to die as I am that you are sitting by my bed now. It seemed that something told me I would never get well again."

"And that old something was a false prophet," said Dorothy, smiling sweetly. "And what luck for Claude that it was. And all those messages you sent to Claude," she laughed, catching up Essie's hand and pressing it to her lips. "I guess I will let you tell him all that your sweet little self, for I don't mean to talk for you when you can talk for yourself."

"When Claude comes home you will not have the chance to do any talking for me, or yourself either, for that matter. I will do enough talking for six girls; no one else will have the chance to say a word to him," Essie said. "I shall have so much to tell him I am sure I shall not get through in a lifetime. It would take a lifetime to tell him how well I love him, and then I could not tell him half. But there are other things besides that I must tell him. One

thing, for instance—I must tell him what a good little girl you are. Then he will love you, for being so good to his little Essie. But you are not only good to me. You are kind to every one. I am sure everybody loves you. I know Rupert does.”

“No, he does not,” said Dorothy, blushing.

“Has he ever told you he did?” Essie asked.

“No,” Dorothy replied. “Nor do I think he will.”

“I am sure he will some day,” said Essie, “for I know he loves you. ‘Actions speak louder than words.’ When he comes to visit Kenton he always puts in the greatest portion of the time talking with you. He says he comes to see Kenton, but it seems strange that he should talk with Dorothy all the while.”

“Well,” said Dorothy, “that is because Daphne comes with him and Kenton talks to her all the time. What can Rupert do but talk to me?”

“Well,” said Essie, teasingly, “Daphne does not come every time Rupert does, and I can see no difference when she does not come. Besides, he could talk to you without looking at you all the while so lovingly that no one can fail to guess what he considers ‘a great secret.’ But I don’t blame him for loving you. No one could help that.”

“You must not try to flatter me, Essie,” she replied. “If you do, I shall punish you by not letting you have a single look at Claude’s picture for a whole day.”

“Well,” said Essie, “if that is the penalty I must

pay, I will not tell you another thing that I have read in Rupert's eyes when he looks at you."

In two weeks more Essie was so much better that she was able to sit up in an easy chair pulled up by that self-same window where Claude had sat the evening he first came to Mrs. Lorrimer's. And in one more week she was so much better that Kenton said he thought she was well enough for him to go back to college, and so in a few days he and Rupert went back to Eton.

But before they left, Rupert's twentieth birthday had come and he reminded his father of the promise he made, relative to his making a will and bequeathing the earldom to Claude Ross. The Earl thought Rupert had long since forgotten this as he had not been reminded of it since the day he made the promise.

"Now, father," said Rupert, "you know you made me this promise, and you have always said you had never been known to break a promise, so please do not break this one. I want the earldom less than ever now. You said I would think better of it as I grew older, but I do not, and now before I leave for college again, please do this for me."

"Rupert," said his father, hesitatingly, "I can do this to keep my promise to you, but if I had thought you would still be so foolish as to wish it, I would never have made you the promise. I fear you will regret this step some day."

"I am sure I shall not, father," Rupert replied. "Do not let that trouble you any more. But do not

let mamma know of this," he continued, "for I am sure she would not approve of it."

"Neither do I," the Earl replied.

"But I can persuade you," said Rupert, "and I cannot persuade mother. And understand, this is to be a secret. I do not want any one to know of this but you and the lawyers who do the work, and please give them to understand it is a secret. Will you do this?"

"Yes," said the Earl, very unwillingly.

So it was settled that the earldom should come to Claude at the present Earl's death, and Rupert and Kenton went back to school, the former very happy because he had succeeded in persuading his father to do as he wished.

The boys were very glad to be studying once more, as they were anxious to finish their education. Their old chums were delighted to see them—"the two best boys in school," as they were termed. When they had been gone about a month Essie received a letter from Claude telling her how thankful he was that his darling was left to him, and what a dreadful long time it had been since he had received a letter from her. But he was sure that by the time his letter reached her she would be well enough to write him a long letter. He told her what a sad time it was for him and Uncle Roger when he received Kenton's letter stating how ill she was, and how it seemed a century before he received his last letter. He told her that since he had started over again the money came faster than ever, and he

did not think she would have to wait three more years for his return. When he had closed his letter he added a postscript, telling Essie to convey his thanks to that little Dorothy of whom Kenton spoke in such high terms, for being so diligent in her efforts to save her life, and to tell her he was sure he should like her very much.

"There!" said Essie, when she was through telling Dorothy this. "Didn't I tell you he would like you for being so kind to me."

"Well," said Dorothy, "when you answer his letter you just tell him I don't deserve any thanks for what I have done. I did not do near so much for you as you have done for me. Now will you tell him this?" she said, coaxingly.

"Yes," said Essie, "I will tell him you said this. But of course I shall tell him that you do deserve thanks, and are just a little sunbeam in our home. I really do not see how we could do without you. Dorothy," Essie continued, "what a lucky thing for us all that Kenton brought you home with him."

"I declare, Essie, you will spoil me," said Dorothy, playfully. "You make so much of me that if you don't be careful you will make me vain."

"No danger of that," Essie replied. "But I won't try to convince you of that now. I must write a letter, a very long, loving letter, to some one 'far o'er the deep blue sea.'"

Dorothy went to the piano and began to sing and Essie stopped her writing and listened. When Dorothy was through with the song Essie said,

"Dorothy, sing that beautiful song for me that you so seldom sing, for you know who it reminds me of. And I think it the prettiest of all."

Dorothy ran her fingers lightly over the keys, and then in a low voice she sang the little song:

"I've gathered wild flowers from the hillside
To wreath around my brow,
But so long thou hast kept me waiting
They are dead and withered now.

"Will you never come again
With your bright and merry smile?
Will you never come again
My lonely hours to beguile?

"In bright-lighted halls I have wandered,
Where all was mirth and glee;
But my heart was sad and dreary,
I could not be with thee."

When she had finished singing, Essie said, "Dorothy, do you not think that song suits me exactly?"

"Yes," she replied, "I think it does, for no matter how gay the company you are in, you still have that sad, lonely look on your face, and all because you cannot be with Claude. I think the song suits exactly. But that song is too mournful," she said, turning again to the piano. "I like something lively," and she struck the opening chords to a lively and comic little song and began singing.

Essie again turned to her writing.

When the letter was finished, Essie went over to Dorothy.

"I am sure I am well enough to walk to the

village to post this letter. I have been in the house such a long time, but of course I must ask my nurse about that. Do you think I can go?"

"Yes," said Dorothy, "for my part I think it will do you good to get out for a little exercise, and it is not far to the village."

"Thank you," said Essie. "Such a kind little nurse as you are. But you must come with me."

"All right," said Dorothy, "I'm just dying for a walk," and catching up her hat, she bounded out the door and down the walk to the gate without once stopping till she reached the gate.

She then turned and called to Essie to make haste; she wanted to go. Essie smiled, and told her that it certainly looked that way.

"But I don't mean to go all the way at that gait," she called, "for I don't want to leave you."

When Essie came up with her, Dorothy put her arm lovingly around her waist and told her she would wager she could walk just as slow as she could.

"I have not the least idea but what you can," Essie replied, "for you generally accomplish all you undertake."

They soon reached the village and Essie posted her letter, while Dorothy inquired if there were a letter for her. The postmaster passed her one, and she exclaimed, "Well, I declare! Essie, look here. Who has had the goodness to write to me. This is not Daphne's writing."

And as soon as they reached the outskirts of the

village Dorothy opened the letter with an exclamation of surprise.

"Well, Essie," she said, turning to her, "who do you suppose this is from?"

"Well, I think I can tell from your looks who it is from," Essie replied. "You are blushing red as a rose. I will say Rupert. How is that for guessing?"

"Good," said Dorothy; "that's just who it is from, and as Kenton is always saying, 'My! but isn't this a splendid surprise.' Here, Essie, you just look on and read with me."

"Now I consider this a treat, to let me read your letter before you read it yourself."

"Well, I'm sure there's no secret in it," Dorothy replied; "or even if there were, it would be no secret from you. I can not keep a secret from you, and I may as well let you read it."

"Ah, ha!" exclaimed Essie, when she had read down a little way. "See this, Dorothy! He says: 'As I cannot help thinking of you all the time, I thought I would write you a letter, and I sincerely hope you will favor me with an answer.' How is that for a start, Dorothy? I told you the boy loved you."

"Oh, he has not said so," said Dorothy, smiling. "He only says he thinks of me."

"I know he has not said that yet," Essie replied. "But we have not finished reading the letter. We cannot tell what the letter contains since we have not read it. And even if it does not contain that, I

am sure that makes no difference. He will tell you some day, sooner or later."

"Oh! hush, Essie," she said, as she playfully placed her finger over Essie's lips. "You won't stop talking long enough to let me read my letter, when you know I'm just dying to hear from 'My Rupert.' There!" she said. "See what a mistake you caused me to make. I didn't mean to call him mine. That slipped."

"Oh," said Essie, laughing, "you are always making mistakes on purpose."

"No, no," she replied; "but here you are talking again, and I'm going to faint if I don't soon get to read 'My Rupert's' letter. Oh, dear, I meant to say my letter from Rupert," and she rolled her eyes about in a comical way and had Essie laughing more than she had laughed altogether since Claude had been gone.

"Dorothy, you are a naughty girl," Essie said, "to make one laugh when they do not feel like laughing."

"Yes, but, Essie, do you not know it is also naughty to laugh at one's mistakes," and she shook her head sagely.

"Hush, Dorothy, and read your letter," Essie said, trying to keep from laughing, "and don't try to look as wise as an owl, for you can't put on a solemn look for long at a time."

So they talked on and on until they reached home, without reading the letter. But Dorothy did not do this because she did not appreciate the letter, she

only wanted to cheer Essie up. But when they reached home she drew an easy chair up for Essie, and getting another for herself, she eagerly read Rupert's letter. Before commencing, however, she told Essie she did not mean to let her read her letter, as punishment for being such a chatterbox on the way home. But when she finished reading she laid the letter in Essie's lap.

Essie read it and passed it back to Dorothy, with a look as much as to say, "If I only had not promised to be good, I have found the best thing in the world to tease you about."

"When will you answer this, Dorothy," she asked.

"Oh! some time before we are married," laughed Dorothy, then, catching her breath, she said, "Dear me. There's another of those dreadful mistakes! I meant to say, I would answer it some time before he is married."

"Why use the singular number? You may as well let it go at that, for it will all turn out that way," said Essie.

"No," said Dorothy, "I don't really think it will, and you must not think so, either, for if you do, you will be sadly disappointed. Rupert Ross would not marry a poor girl like Dorothy Donald," and, rising, she ran away to help Mrs. Lorrimer about preparing the evening meal.

CHAPTER XVIII

One morning, about two months after the events in the last chapter, Dorothy and Essie went to the town of S—— to do some shopping. It was Dorothy's first visit to the city since she ran away from Mrs. Miller. She had always been afraid to go back, for fear that she would meet Mrs. Miller. But now she told Essie that she had grown so much and changed so in appearance that should she meet Mrs. Miller, Mrs. Miller would not know her, and that it was no matter if she did, for she could take her own part. So she started in high spirits, little thinking of the trouble it would bring her.

She and Essie had almost finished their shopping. They intended to take the four o'clock train, and it was almost that time now. As they were going down the street, they were compelled to pass an ill-looking grog shop, the door of which was standing open. Dorothy glanced in as she passed, and who should she see but her old foe, Mrs. Miller? She hurried by, but the old woman saw her, and she muttered to herself, "That looks mighty like that little impudent yagabond that left me. Yes, it is."

As Dorothy and Essie passed on down the street they met a young man who stared at Dorothy impudently and muttered, "By Jove! there's a beauty for me, if I can find out where she stays. I see my old woman down the street. I'll just tell her that that girl just suits my eye." This frightened the two girls very much and they hurried on to the

depot without making any more purchases. They were not a little surprised to see the same young man enter the waiting room a little after they did and seat himself just opposite them. He continued to stare at Dorothy, to the girls' great annoyance. When the train pulled in, they were more annoyed than ever, for the young man boarded the train directly after them.

But we must go back now to Mrs. Miller, whom we left standing in the door of the grog shop gazing after Dorothy and muttering curses on her head. The young man hurriedly walked up to her and said, "Mrs. Miller, did you see those two girls that just passed here?"

"Yes," she replied, "and I hate one of the little vipers like 'pizen.'"

"Well, I don't care anything about your hating. I want to know if you know who that one is on the left side, the low one with the brown hair?"

"Yes, that's the gal I hate, and if you will get her in your possession I will work for you six months free of charge."

"That's the thing I want to do," he said. "But where does she live?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Miller replied. "But I know she don't stay in this city."

"You old fool," he said, "why didn't you tell me this before now? I've lost sight of her now and don't know if I can find her again. You stay here till I call for you, if it's doom's day—do you hear?"

and turning he hurried down the street in the direction Dorothy and Essie had gone.

He was about discouraged when, looking down a side street, he saw them. He walked rapidly—almost ran—till he turned the corner; he then slackened his pace, as he did not want them to see him. However, they did not see him, nor did they suspect that he was following them until he entered the waiting room. But when, in the train, he saw that he had raised their suspicion, he bought a book and settled down as if for a long journey, and he did not appear to notice the two girls. This served to throw them off their guard, and they thought perhaps they were wrong in suspecting the man after all.

When the train reached Rossville they got off, but did not see that the stranger did also. The last they had noticed him he had laid his book down and leaned his head on the seat in front of him, and was to all appearances asleep. But when the train stopped he ventured to raise his head just in time to see Dorothy and Essie leaving the train, and, muttering to himself, "So I've tracked you, my pretty bird, to your nest," he seized his hat and left the car.

Dorothy and Essie started immediately for home, as it was growing dusk, but they were not afraid to go alone, for it was a short distance. They talked freely now, as they had no suspicion that anyone was following them.

"Gracious! Dorothy," said Essie, "but didn't that young man act strangely?"

"Yes," said Dorothy. "He frightened me almost to death."

"Yes, and I'll frighten you more than ever in a few days," the man thought to himself, as he walked on behind them, listening to every word they said. "I wish everything was ready. I think now would be as good a chance as I shall ever have; but there's no need to think of that, for I can't take the little beauty with me tonight."

Essie and Dorothy walked on until they came to Mrs. Bishop's, where they stopped and called for Mrs. Lorrimer, who had been spending the day there. She came out and the three soon reached home. Dorothy and Essie were not very sorry, for they were greatly fatigued, and they soon retired, after having told Mrs. Lorrimer how they were frightened at a young man who stared at them so persistently.

The young man followed them to their home, then went back to the station, which he reached just in time to catch the next train back to the city. It was growing very late when he reached the grog shop where he had left Mrs. Miller, whom he now found sitting up against the wall at the end of the room, snoring loudly. He shook her roughly.

"Is this what I pay you for?" he said, "to sit up and sleep. Why aren't you on the lookout for some other pretty little bird?"

"I did look," she sullenly said, "but couldn't see any and I was sleepy."

"Well, come along now, I have some news for you."

They walked on till they reached the same wretched old house where Dorothy had lived. They entered, and, throwing himself in an old chair he said, "Well, Mrs. Miller, I have found the bird's nest. She lives out from the city a few miles at a little place called Rossville—I followed to her own door. It is more than twenty miles from here and as you have helped me many times before, I want you to help me this time, and I assure you, I will pay you well."

"No pay do I want to help you get that girl, for I hate her. It would do me good to see her groveling in the dust. She left me, but if she don't watch out she will be glad to crawl back to me yet."

"No," he said, with an ugly smile, "I can give her a better home than you—that is, for a while. I may turn her out in the streets some day and tell her to go."

"Won't that be glorious revenge?" the old woman said, and laughed wildly. "She always was a proud little minx, and won't it take that pride out of her, though? And won't she be glad to come back to me yet!" and again the old woman laughed loudly.

"But when are you going to fetch her here, Ben? I'm just so anxious to get hold of her once more! I'll teach her how to go off and leave me, the worthless little vagabond," and the old woman's hawk-like eyes snapped viciously, and she clinched her hand. "Sarah Miller don't often forget or for-

give an injury, but of all the revenge I have ever got, this will be the sweetest. Oh! won't she come down off that high pedestal! But wait, only wait! Her time is coming."

"Yes," the man replied, "and it will not be long in getting here."

"The quicker the better," she said. "But how are you going to get her here?"

"I'll work that part of it," he said. "You just have things ready for her when she does get here."

"And I'll do that," she said; "I'll do that. I wish I had my fingers around the little minx's neck right now. I could strangle the life out of her."

"No, that would not do," he said, quietly. "It might suit you, but it would not suit me. Now, you understand, when I bring her here, you are not to forget yourself so far as to undertake anything like that."

"No, I shan't do that," she replied. "The other will be the best plan. Now what is it you want me to do?"

"Just the same as you have done," he said. "You know what you always do as well as I, so what's the need of asking? I am going out to Rossville tomorrow night and stay there till I trap the bird. Don't you leave this house, for I am liable to come at any time. I'll bring you down enough gin to last till I come back. I will do this tomorrow, and now all you've got to do is keep your mouth shut."

When he had gone the old woman shook her fist threateningly and muttered, "The proud little

hypocrite! I would be glad to drag her down in the lowest pit. I've helped to drag more innocent-looking things than her down—there's no use asking mercy of Sarah Miller."

After Dorothy had left, Mrs. Miller had to go to work or starve, so she began to take in washing. She washed for Ben Thomas, and one day he asked her if she would not like to earn her money in an easier way? "Yes," she had replied, "of course I would. But where am I to earn it any easier, and how?"

"Here in this city," he replied, "and I'll tell you how. Just keep boarding house."

The old woman laughed at this. "I say, keep a boarding house, when I don't get enough money to feed myself and to buy gin."

"You don't understand me," he said. "What I want you to do is to keep a boarder just once in awhile. Sometimes I take a fancy to people, and they don't me, but I just lock them up till they do take a fancy to me. Are you easy persuaded?" he asked, eyeing her closely. "If you are you are not the woman I need, for sometimes these people will try to persuade you to let them get away. But you must not do it, no matter how much money they offer you. I'll double any amount they offer. Now that is the kind of a boarding house I mean. Do you understand me?"

"Yes," she said; "but if they don't offer me any money, what are you going to give me for my work?"

"I'll keep you in plenty of nice things to eat, and all the gin you want, and a new dress occasionally. Now, how does that strike you? Is it a bargain?"

"You bet it is," she replied, "that's easier than working yourself to death. Do you mean to say I won't have any work to do?"

"No," he replied, "nothing but cooking for the boarders, and that won't be much trouble."

"No," she said, "that will be nothing compared with the hard work that I have to do. I'm not able to work; I am sick all the time, everything goes to my head."

The man smiled at this and thought he had found the very one he needed.

"But you haven't promised me not to let any of them go," he continued.

"Well, I will promise. Of course I shan't let any of them go. I would be a brainless old fool to let one go when I was getting pay for keeping them there."

"Well," he said, handing her some money, "this is to get ready for the boarders."

"Oh! What a kind young man you are," she said, "to help a poor old woman that's not able to work, because her head is out of order."

No sooner had Ben Thomas left her she went to the grog shop and drank all she could and then started for home. But she did not get very far, for she tumbled over in the gutter. A policeman came along, and helping her up, he started with her to the station house. It was, however, the very same

policeman who had arrested her the evening she gave chase to Kenton and Dorothy. He told her to wake up and walk.

"I can't walk," she said, "I'm sick. Everything goes to my head."

"Yes, I see it does," the policeman answered. "But I think you had better walk, if you don't want to be dragged, for I am very sure I will not try to carry you. I thought I told you never to let me catch you on the streets drunk again."

"Why, I wasn't on the street, I was in the gutter, and I'm no more drunk than you are. I think it's nice that a poor old woman can't get sick and fall into the gutter without a policeman must come along and arrest her, and accuse her of being drunk, when she's no more drunk than an angel in Heaven, and wouldn't it look nice for an angel to be walking the streets of Heaven drunk."

"That is enough of your rubbish. I don't want to hear you open your mouth again."

So they went on to the station house.

But when she got out the next morning she cursed the policeman for all she could think of, and bought a bottle of gin, but she did not drink it until she reached home, for fear of being arrested again. She stayed drunk until all this money was gone, but Ben Thomas soon supplied her with more, and she had been in this condition ever since Dorothy left her.

CHAPTER XIX

The following morning Ben Thomas took Mrs. Miller enough gin to last her until his return, and, again warning her to keep her mouth shut and to be ready for them at any time, he secured a closed carriage and set out to drive the twenty miles through the country, taking with him a man whom he had hired on purpose for this kind of business. This man was a big, broad-shouldered fellow with sandy hair and little greenish eyes, a prominent nose and a rosy complexion. He was a bad man, of course, or no matter what the pay, he would not have helped Thomas with his diabolical scheme. He was exactly the sort of man Ben Thomas wanted for the business; a man that would stoop to do anything for money. It was hardly dusk when they drove into the little wood between Mrs. Lorrimer's home and Rossville.

Ben Thomas got out of the carriage, and, telling the man to wait there for further orders, he left the wood and walked slowly down the road towards Mrs. Lorrimer's. By the time he reached the cottage it was dark, and, opening the gate softly, he walked in and up to the window. An exclamation of surprise almost escaped him when he saw the three women seated around a table sewing and evidently alone.

"Not a man on the place," he murmured; "that makes it easier for me. I can't do anything tonight, though, for they are shut up for the night. I may

as well go back," and, turning, he made his way out of the yard as softly as he had come in. Going back to the edge of the wood, he gave a peculiar whistle, and the carriage came quietly and quickly.

"Well done, Joe," he said to the driver. "I was only giving you a little practice. I wanted to see how quick you could get here when I gave the signal. But I shan't do that any more, for I see. You may know the next time I give you that signal there is work for you to do."

"What! Haven't you got the gal?" he exclaimed, in a disappointed tone. "I was in hopes you would have no trouble. I was sure you had got her and I was just preparing for the fun."

"No, Joe," he replied, "I haven't got her. I didn't try. But she and the other girl and an old woman live alone down the road here just a little way. Not a man on the place, do you understand? It will be an easy matter to get the girl."

"Why not play burglar? Go in tonight and not steal anything but the gal," said the man.

"No, that is the very last thing I will try. But I'll do that rather than miss getting her, and having all this trouble for nothing. But we won't stay in Rossville tonight—it might cause suspicion. We will go back to that inn we passed about a mile the other side of the village and put up there. What great luck that this wood is here! But if anybody should see you and ask any questions, you tell them you have a sick mother just across the country a piece, and are going over to see her, so as to

bring her home with you if she is able, and that you had been driving fast and had stopped to cool the horses off a bit. Do you understand?" he said, as he sprang lightly into the carriage.

"Yes," said the man, doggedly.

"Tell them anything you like, so you don't tell them what we did come for," continued Thomas. "Now drive on."

They left the wood and soon reached the inn, where they put up for the night. The landlord told them they could stay and did not ask any questions.

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The next day was to be a very busy one with Mrs. Lorrimer and the two girls, as they had planned to sew all day. Dorothy seemed to be happier than usual and when she was not singing to herself she was talking and laughing gaily. It was growing late in the afternoon and they had been sewing all day. Dorothy was just cutting a piece of cloth, when snap went the scissors, and Dorothy exclaimed, "Oh! mamma. What shall we do now? I've broken the scissors and now this cannot be finished tonight! I did so want to get through!"

"Why, how did you break them, child?" Mrs. Lorrimer asked.

"I can't tell," Dorothy replied. "I was only cutting this cloth. I don't see why they broke so easily."

"Well, it doesn't matter," Mrs. Lorrimer said; "they were almost worn out, anyway."

"But, mamma, it matters about this work and I mean to run down to the village and get some new ones. I can get there and back home again before night."

"Don't you think Essie had better go along with you? Are you not afraid?" Mrs. Lorrimer asked. "It is so late for you to go alone."

"Why, I am not the least bit afraid," she replied, "and there is no need for Essie to go, for she can have this basting done by the time I get back."

"Well, hurry then, Dorothy," said Mrs. Lorrimer, "for I am almost afraid for you to go alone."

"I will," she replied. "I shan't be gone but a very few minutes," and taking up her hat she started for the village.

She soon purchased the scissors, and thought as she was so near she might as well go to the post-office. She did so and received a letter from Rupert and one for Mrs. Lorrimer from Kenton. She placed these, together with the scissors, in her pocket, and hurried on in the direction of home. As she walked on she realized that it was almost night and she had stayed longer than she had intended. But she thought by walking rapidly she could reach home before dark, and she hurried on, all unconscious of a pair of black, demon eyes that had seen her.

Ben Thomas was standing by the roadside behind a large tree, which hid him from her view.

"Phew," he said to himself, "I call this luck. Here she comes, and alone, too!"

On she came all unconscious, and as she passed the tree behind which he was hiding, he stepped out, and throwing his arm about her, he placed his hand over her mouth before she had time to scream. With the other hand he placed a handkerchief saturated with chloroform over her nose and mouth, and, lifting her in his arms, he ran with her to the wood and gave that peculiar whistle which he had given the evening before. Again the carriage dashed up at break-neck speed.

"I've got her this time, Joe," he said. "Open the door, quick."

The man quickly obeyed, and, putting Dorothy in, Ben Thomas jumped in beside her, and told the man to drive straight to the city and not to be long about it.

On they went at a furious speed until they had gone about half the distance to the city, when they came to a steep hill. On they went, never checking, and just as they had almost reached the bottom, one of the horses stumbled and fell headlong, taking the other horse with him, throwing the driver from his seat into a deep ravine that was on one side of the road, and utterly smashing one of the carriage wheels.

This sudden jolt served to rouse Dorothy, who sat up, and, after staring vainly around in the darkness, asked "Where am I? Who are you?"

"I'm one that loves you very much," he said, trying to put his arm around her. Dorothy screamed and drew back.

"You won't let me be loving with you, eh! Well, I'm not surprised. But you'll get over all that in a few days."

"Who are you?" Dorothy asked again.

"And so you want to know me, do you?" he said. "My name is Ben Thomas, but perhaps you would like to see me," and lighting a match he held it over his head and said, "Look, Beauty! Don't you think I'm handsome?"

Dorothy did look, and, quickly recognizing him as the young man that had frightened Essie and her the day they went to the city, she murmured "God help me!" and fell forward in a dead faint.

Reaching under the seat, he secured a lantern and after lighting it he called, "What did you stop for, Joe? Go on! What do you mean by this?"

But no answer came from Joe.

Lifting Dorothy back on the carriage seat and taking a bottle of brandy from his pocket, he placed the bottle to her lips and forced some of the liquor down her throat. Then he sprang out of the carriage to see what had happened, muttering curses upon the driver for stopping. He soon learned the cause of the difficulty. He called Joe but received no answer, and, seizing the lantern, he began to look for him, stumbling about in the darkness. He found him, and, after speaking to him and receiving no answer he pulled him rudely over on his face and discovered that his head had been smashed against a stone and he was dead.

"Now I call this confounded luck," he mut-

tered. "But I can't stop to carry him with me, for the carriage wheel is smashed."

Turning he left the dead man there as if he had been a dead dog, and going to the horses, he began to cut them loose. Discovering that one horse had a broken leg, he pulled a pistol from his pocket and shot the animal dead. He then proceeded to cut the other horse loose and, finding that he was uninjured, he walked up to the carriage to see if Dorothy had recovered. He found the carriage empty. A volley of oaths fell from his lips and, tying the horse to the carriage he started back over the road to look for the girl, cursing his luck with every breath. He went probably half a mile and was on the point of turning about and going back, when he saw a dark object crouched on the side of the road. He went up and finding it was Dorothy, he seized her roughly by the arm and said, "So you thought to get away from me, did you? I'll have you guarded closer if that's your game!"

He again placed the chloroform to her nose and mouth, and, lifting her in his arms, he retraced his steps to the broken carriage.

When he reached the carriage he hardly knew how to act. He knew it would never do for them to stay there till morning, and he was afraid if he left Dorothy again she would be gone when he returned. There was only one thing he could do. So he got on the horse, placing Dorothy up in front of him, and rode away as fast as he could.

He rode on in this way till he came to a farm

house about a mile up the road, where he inquired if they did not have some kind of a conveyance which they could let him have, telling the man that he and his wife lived in the city and they had been to see her mother who was ill, and were compelled to get back to the city that night; that when the carriage was wrecked, his wife had fainted and had not yet recovered. The man insisted that he should bring Dorothy in the house and try to revive her, but Thomas told him no. She would be all right in a few minutes and that if he would let him have a conveyance of some kind he would bring it back the following day and pay the money into his hand right there—just any amount he might name.

The man told him he did not have any kind of conveyance except a spring wagon, but he was welcome to this and that he would not charge him anything for that if he would bring it back in good order. Thomas promised to do so and asked the man to hitch the horse as he didn't like to lay his wife on the ground and it would take up too much time to carry her in the house. The man did this willingly and soon had the horse to the wagon. Thomas sprang in and placing Dorothy on the seat beside him he supported her with one arm while he drove with the other. He drove rapidly as he did not know but what the girl's friends had missed her and were in pursuit.

The farmer thought there was something very strange about the couple, strange that she had fainted, and that he did not want to take her in

the house to try to revive her. He asked his wife if she supposed he had done anything wrong in letting the man have the wagon. She replied she did not suppose he had, but there was certainly something very strange about them.

CHAPTER XX

Ben Thomas reached the city with Dorothy just as he heard a clock somewhere strike the hour of midnight.

"This is a pretty good drive after all," he muttered to himself. "After all my bad luck I'm here, and it's just twelve o'clock."

Each time that Dorothy had showed signs of waking, Thomas had given her a little more chloroform, and when he reached the old house where Mrs. Miller lived he took Dorothy in his arms and carried her to the door. He had a hard time rousing Mrs. Miller, as she was sleeping off the effects of a drunken day. At last he succeeded in rousing her, and, after making him tell his name and what he wanted and getting a good cursing for being so particular, she opened the door.

"Is everything ready?" he asked.

"Yes," she said, "and have you got the gal?"

"You bet I've got her," he replied. "Did you ever know me to fail? Come along with the light and open the doors for me."

The old woman obeyed, and, after carrying Dorothy up three flights of steps, he stood in a richly-furnished room, very different from the other part of the old house. He laid Dorothy on a sofa and told the old woman to put her to bed and come out and leave her alone to sleep off the effects of the chloroform. He then left the house, after telling

Mrs. Miller to be sure to watch the girl so closely that she would have no possible chance of escape.

"I'll do that," she said, "have no fear about that. The worthless little wretch—how I hate her."

When Dorothy awoke next morning at first she could not remember what had happened. Then slowly she remembered, and, rising from the bed where Mrs. Miller had placed her, she dressed herself quickly and began to look about to see if there was any means of escape. She discovered that she was in the fourth story and that all the windows had iron bars across them. She then examined the door. It was securely locked. She knew she could not escape from this room so she determined to be as quiet as she could.

She seated herself in an easy chair and tried to think how she should escape, and how she should defend herself. And what would Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie think? If she had only listened to Mrs. Lorrimer and taken Essie with her, if she could not have helped her out, they would at least have known that she had been taken by force and had not left them willingly. Then it occurred to her that she had the two letters in her pocket from Rupert and Kenton. She took them slowly from her pocket, and there with the letters were the scissors she had purchased the day before.

"Thank God," she said. "I knew He would help me! I can defend myself now. I had entirely forgotten these scissors! It is a miracle that the wretch did not take them from me."

She now heard footsteps upon the stairs, and

quickly returning the scissors and letters to her pocket she leaned back in her chair. She supposed it was Ben Thomas and she was surprised to see her old enemy, Mrs. Miller, enter the room. Dorothy turned as pale as death, for she knew if she was placed in the cruel old woman's hands, her chance of escape would be utterly cut off.

"Yes, you may turn pale, you worthless little vagabond! I've got you now, you runaway; I've got you back and I'll see that you don't leave this house again. You'll be glad to stay with me yet," said the old woman. "I've kept lots of such as you here for Ben Thomas and I can keep you."

"Have you no heart, Mrs. Miller," Dorothy asked, "to keep a poor girl here—the victim of a vile wretch?"

"Yes," said Mrs. Miller, "you call him vile, but what are you? You left me alone to starve."

"Well, Mrs. Miller, how could you blame me for leaving you when I could find a better home? The people I have been living with have been as kind to me as I could wish any one to be."

"Yes, you say they are kind, as much as to say I was not, after I fed and clothed you as long as I did! That's the thanks I'm to get for it. You unthankful little wretch! I despise you. I should like to strangle you like a viper! I hate the very sight of you."

"Mrs. Miller, let me go—let me go!"

"Hear her," the old woman said scornfully. "I see them good people, as you are fool enough to

call them, have learned you to be proud. No, I shan't let you go. I know what your little game is. You think you'll persuade me to let you go. But I'll never do it. I get money for keeping you here. You have no money to give me to let you go, and even if you offered me ever so much Ben Thomas will double the amount."

"True, I have no money to offer you," Dorothy replied, meekly, "but if you will only let me go, I will pray God to bless you, is all I can do."

"God and I parted company years ago. I don't want any of His blessings! I want gold—gin will give me more satisfaction than all your God's blessings!"

"Heaven help you, Mrs. Miller!" said Dorothy. "I did not know you were such a heartless old woman."

Dorothy knew there was no further use in trying to persuade Mrs. Miller to let her go, so she said, "I will not ask you to help me any more. I see your heart is as hard as stone. But this same God of whom you talk so slightly will help me to escape from you and that villain."

"All right," said Mrs. Miller, tauntingly, "you trust in your God and see if He will unlock this door, and invite you to walk out."

"I don't care to have any further words with you, Mrs. Miller," Dorothy replied. "Please leave the room. I detest such as you, Mrs. Miller. You think I am a young girl and have nothing to defend myself with, but God has not forsaken me yet and He will help me take my own part."

"You impudent little viper," the old woman almost screamed, "to say such things to me here in my own house! I've a mind to choke your tongue out and trample you under my feet!"

"Perhaps you had better try that," Dorothy said, "perhaps it would not be so easily done as you think. Again I say I can defend myself."

"You don't mean to say you are armed, do you?"

"I mean to say I can take my own part," Dorothy replied, "and if Ben Thomas interferes with me, I swear I shall do my best to kill him. I do not want to be a murderer, but before I will be robbed of my virtue I will kill him, so help me Heaven!"

"Well," said the old woman, "if you are armed I think I'll see if I can't persuade you to give up your weapon. Ben Thomas is not a man to be fooled with by such weak things as you. He would shoot you just as quick as he would a snake."

"I know I am nothing but a weak girl," Dorothy replied, "but I will fight till I fall dead where I stand."

"I don't think you are so game as all that. I think I'll try you. I'm just aching to get my hands on you, and I'm going to take that weapon from you, whatever it may be." And before Dorothy was aware of the old woman's intentions, Mrs. Miller sprang toward her as quick as a cat. Snatching at Dorothy's hand she cried, "I'll see if you are all that you say you are." But wrenching her arm loose from the old woman's grasp, Dor-

othy sprang to one side, and then, perceiving that the key had been left in the lock, she snatched it out and quickly sprang through the door, which she locked on the outside, leaving Mrs. Miller on the inside, muttering curses on Dorothy's head and on herself for being so careless.

Dorothy's heart gave a great bound.

"Thank God for all His mercy!" she murmured as she bounded down the stairs, two steps at a time. She had just started on the second flight when she lost her footing and fell headlong to the bottom of the stairs. She lay there a minute or two before she could move, then Mrs. Miller's curses and screams of help, murder, fire and every other thing she could think of roused her and rising she started again.

On she went, thanking God for His mercy at every bound until she reached the street door, and was just going out this when she ran straight into the arms of Ben Thomas. When Dorothy saw who it was she fell to the floor.

Thomas did not know what had happened. Mrs. Miller's cries came from above as though some one was murdering her. So, lifting Dorothy in his arms, he again carried her up the steps to the fourth story. When he reached there he discovered that the door was locked. He demanded of Mrs. Miller to open the door.

"I can't," she said, almost breathless from so much screaming. "The little wretch has gone and locked me in."

"She is not gone," he replied, "but came near

being gone if I had not come just in the nick of time. Here's the key on the floor, where she threw it in her haste to get away," and picking it up, he unlocked the door, laid Dorothy on the sofa then turned to Mrs. Miller and demanded of her an explanation.

"You are a good person to put any trust in! I thought you were as anxious to keep the girl here as I, and if I had just been a minute later, she would have escaped. You old fool, I ought to shoot you for being so careless."

"No, Ben," she replied, "wait till I tell you how it happened. I could not help it. The little wild cat jumped on me and before I could help it or saw what she was about she had the key out of my pocket and was out the door in just a second. That's how it was. She's the gamest one you've ever brought here."

"Well, from this on, Mrs. Miller," he said, "don't come in the room when you bring her food. Just come to the door and set it down then lock the door at once. Do you understand?"

"Yes, sir," she replied, meekly, "I'll do that, for the little wretch come near choking the life out of me. She is a regular demon."

"Bring me some water, Mrs. Miller, and then leave the room," he said.

She obeyed and when she had gone he sprinkled some of the water on Dorothy's face and then sat down to wait until her fainting spell was over. In a short time Dorothy opened her eyes, and, perceiving Ben Thomas sitting over on the other side

of the room, she arose and drawing herself up to her full height, she said, "What do you mean by coming in this room without my permission? Leave this room at once."

"By Jove! pet," he replied, "that's a very unpleasant greeting for one that loves you as much as I do. Really it is. But as the room belongs to me, I guess I have a right to stay here. So come, love, and sit down by me, won't you?" he said, fixing his wicked black eyes on her face.

Dorothy gave him only a look of scorn.

"Say, love," he continued, "don't look at me like that—really I can't bear it! Heavens, you are more beautiful than I thought. It makes me love you more than ever to see you look like that. But do come and sit down by me. I love you, indeed I do."

"Leave this room at once!" said Dorothy, pointing to the door.

"Well, I'm sorry, pet, very sorry," he continued, "but really I can't oblige you this time. I like to look at you too well to leave the room, and wouldn't I love to kiss you? Really I think I will," and he advanced toward her.

"Stand back, you impudent cur," she said slowly.

"Really, I can't stand back," he said. "Those rosy cheeks and red lips look so tempting. I would stand back, love, if I could, but I can not. And say, pet, won't you kiss me? Please do—just once."

"Kiss you? I would rather kiss the evil one himself."

"Well, if you won't kiss me willingly I guess I'll just have to take one any way," and again he advanced toward her.

"Stand back, I tell you," repeated Dorothy.

"Well, by Jove! you've got pluck! Say, what would you take to kiss me? I'll give you twenty pounds in gold—by Jove! I will, if you'll kiss me one time. Now I consider that a pretty high price for so small a thing as one little kiss."

"I would not let you touch my lips for all the gold in the world," she replied, "you base, worthless scoundrel."

"Oh," he said, "please don't call me hard names. It isn't polite, you know. But if you can not be persuaded, I'll just take the kiss anyway."

Dorothy's hand quietly sought her pocket. Thomas did not notice this movement and, advancing another step or two, he put out his hand as if to take hold of her. Quick as a flash there was a glitter of steel and the scoundrel staggered and fell to the floor.

Mrs. Miller, who had been listening at the key-hole, heard him fall and rushed into the room. She shut the door, locked it and took the key from the door and sprang toward Dorothy.

"Stand back, Mrs. Miller," said Dorothy in a warning voice. "I do not wish to injure you, but I shall be compelled to do so if you do not leave me alone. And now," she said, pointing toward

the wretch on the floor, "take that man out of this room."

"Yes," cried Mrs. Miller, "you have near killed him," and half-carrying, half-dragging him to the door she pulled him outside. Then, relocking the door, with a great effort she managed to get him down stairs and on a bed. Then she hurried for a doctor.

CHAPTER XXI

Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie were greatly alarmed when dark came and Dorothy did not return.

"I can not see what is keeping the child so long," Mrs. Lorrimer said.

"It may be that she has stopped at Mrs. Bishop's," Essie replied, "but then it is hardly probable that she would for she was so determined to finish this work tonight."

"Well," said Mrs. Lorrimer, "I can't see what else has delayed her. I am becoming quite uneasy about the child. Suppose we walk down to Mrs. Bishop's and see if she is there."

"All right," Essie replied, "for I am becoming alarmed. She never did this way before."

But when they reached Mrs. Bishop's no Dorothy was there, nor had she been there that day. They were alarmed in good earnest now. Mr. Bishop said he would walk down to the village and see if he could find her. But he returned in a short time, with two or three other men who had joined in the search, and said that he could find no trace of her. Only he said they had seen where it looked as if there had been a struggle; there were the prints of a small shoe and then those that were larger, that looked like a man's footstep.

Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie were almost distracted when they heard this.

"I fear some one has murdered the child," Mrs. Lorrimer said.

"No," said Essie, "if she had been murdered, her body would have been found. My fears are that some one has carried her away."

But Mrs. Lorrimer could be made to believe nothing else but what she had been murdered.

Men, boys, women and children searched with lanterns all that night; the whole neighborhood was aroused. But when the morning came Dorothy was still missing. They searched all the next day and the next; the river was dragged; every place searched that could be thought of, but no Dorothy was found. Mrs. Lorrimer sent a telegram to Kenton to come home at once, and help search for the missing girl. He came and Rupert accompanied him.

They arrived two days after Dorothy's disappearance; they searched the surrounding country for a week without any better success than the others had. At last the idea came to Kenton that probably Mrs. Miller had something to do with this and he told Rupert that he would go to the town of S——, find Mrs. Miller, and if she knew anything concerning Dorothy, force her to tell it. Rupert said he would go with him.

He went to the house where Dorothy had lived. Mrs. Miller still lived there.

This was better luck than he expected. He went into the house and Mrs. Miller recognized him at once as the boy that helped Dorothy to get

away from her. She at once commenced to rail at Kenton for helping Dorothy to escape.

He waited until she was through and then said, "Mrs. Miller, Dorothy disappeared a few days ago and I would be very glad if you could give me any information regarding her."

The old woman turned pale as the thought struck her that it was probable he had traced Dorothy to her house, but she determined if she had to fight her own battle to the last she would do so, and she said as though it was the first time she knew of it, "Disappeared, the little wretch! She won't stay at a good home when she has one. Look the way she told lies about me and left me, and now she's left you. Like as not she's run away with some worthless vagabond and married. She's an ungrateful little imp."

"No," Kenton replied, looking her straight in the eye. "No, she has been stolen and I believe you've had a hand in the stealing."

The old woman looked as if she was going to faint for she thought now that surely he had traced the girl there.

"Me? You insulting thing to accuse a poor old woman like me of stealing that gal! Why, how do you think I could get away out to Rossville Station to steal a gal?"

"If you had nothing to do with it, how came you to know she lived at Rossville?" Kenton asked.

"Well, a friend of mine told me he saw her out

there," she said, quickly, or rather she managed to stammer out.

"And may I ask who that friend was?" said Kenton.

"You can ask if you're a mind to," she said. "But I'll not tell you for it's none of your business. What is it to you, who my friends are?"

"Why it isn't anything," Kenton replied. "I only asked through curiosity."

"Well, I don't like folks to poke their noses in my business just through curiosity. If you've no reasons for asking questions don't ask them."

"Pray excuse me," Kenton said politely. "I assure you I meant no offence whatever. As you can not tell me anything concerning Dorothy I suppose I may as well be going."

"There was no need to come here at first," the old woman said, spitefully. "You ought to know better than to come poking your nose into an old woman's business—an old woman who you had injured enough already by stealing her gal."

"Well, I beg your pardon," he said, "but I thought perhaps you knew something concerning her," and raising his hat, he walked away.

He went at once to Rupert and told him how the old woman looked when he began to talk about Dorothy and that he was sure she knew something concerning Dorothy's disappearance and perhaps that friend she spoke of helped her in getting Dorothy back.

"I'll tell you what you do, Kenton," Rupert said, after a moment's thought, "suppose we have the

house searched. Just as likely as not Dorothy is there and was there when you were."

"Agreed," said Kenton, "we'll have the house searched to-morrow. That's the very idea, Rupert."

The following day, Rupert and Kenton, accompanied by two policemen, went to search the house. But when they had searched it, no Dorothy was to be found. They discovered the richly furnished room and inquired of Mrs. Miller the reason why it was so different from the rest of the house. She replied that a rich gentleman stayed up there sometimes.

"But if he is so wealthy, why does he stay in such a place as this?" Rupert asked.

"I don't know," the old woman replied, snappishly, "I never was so inquisitive as to ask him."

While they were searching one of the old rooms on the fourth floor one of the policemen came upon a piece of paper folded up as small as possible and stuck behind a loose board. Thinking this might be some clue he took the paper from its hiding place and unfolded it. On it was written, "To my dear little Dorothy, whom I leave in care of Mrs. Miller, until she can find my brother, Joseph West. I leave this, Dorothy, as a farewell message from your dying mother. I leave my wedding ring and this message with Mrs. Miller to give to you on your tenth birthday, should she not be able to find my brother. When last heard of, he was in London; tell him, Dorothy, to forgive his little sister for loving the man whom he

hated so much, and whose only fault was loving me too well. Tell him we lived very happily together, if we were poor, until God took my dear one from me and left me alone, penniless and almost helpless with a little daughter to support. And now I am dying and must leave my darling alone. But God grant that she may fall into kind hands! I know that Joseph will be kind to Dorothy for his little sister's sake. Keep my wedding ring, Dorothy. It is all I had to remind me of my husband and will be all you will have to remind you of your poor dear father and your heart-broken mother, Anna Donald."

"Well," said the policeman, "here's a little piece of paper that concerns Miss Donald," as he handed it to Kenton. "Keep that and give it to her when you find her—if you ever do, for it may prove valuable to her."

Kenton took the paper and after reading it said, "I thought there was a secret at the bottom of all this. I'm sure the old woman never gave Dorothy this or the ring either. Suppose we make the old hag tell what she did with the ring," said Kenton, turning to the policeman. "I'll wager she sold it."

"All right," said the policeman, "I suppose she thought no one would ever find this. It is lucky for Miss Donald that it was found for probably it will help her to find her uncle."

They again entered the room where Mrs. Miller was and the policeman said, "Mrs. Miller, may I ask what you did with the ring and letter that

Anna Donald gave you to give to her child on her tenth birthday?"

"Anna Donald left no ring with me," she said, "or letter either," making a vain attempt to look straight in the officer's face.

"Now Mrs. Miller, don't lie," the policeman replied sternly, "I happen to know better than that. Let me have that paper," he said, addressing Kenton.

He handed him the paper and the officer read it aloud, then turned to Mrs. Miller. "Now tell us why you never did what this letter requests."

"Let me see that paper," the old woman said, without appearing to notice his question.

"No," said the officer, "I read all that was on the paper and I know what you want. What did you do with that ring? Why did you not give it to Miss Donald?"

"I told you I done nothing with it," and her eyes looked daggers at the man. "She didn't give me a ring."

"Now, Mrs. Miller," the man continued, "I've heard enough of this. I know what you say is false and if you do not tell me what you did with that ring I'll arrest you and have you put in prison for making away with other people's property. Don't deny it any more. If you do not tell me where that ring is, I'll arrest you and see if staying in prison won't help you to tell."

"I don't know where it is then, if I must tell you," she said.

"Well, if you do not know where it is now, you

at least know what you did with it. Tell us—we've no time to waste."

"Well, if you must know, I pawned it."

"Well, what did you get for it?"

"I got money for it."

"And what did you do with the money?"

"I spent it of course. What do you think I wanted of it?"

"And, Mrs. Miller," the man continued, "I should like very much to know what you spent it for?"

"That's none of your business," she replied, and I'd thank you not to ask so many questions when it don't concern you."

"If you don't tell me this instant I'll see if you can't be forced to tell," he said, taking a pair of handcuffs from his pocket.

"Oh, put them things away," she shrieked, "I'll tell you. I bought gin with the money."

The policeman returned the steel bracelets to his pocket.

"I thought that all along. Now if you don't get up enough money to pay Miss Donald for that ring, I'll have your old neck stretched."

"Oh, I'm not pinched for money now like I was then. I can get all the money I want now, just all I've got to do is to ask for it, no matter how much and I can get it. And I'll pay the gal for her ring. Yes, I'll pay her double," she repeated as though she had more than one meaning to her words.

"Mr. Anderson," said Rupert in a low voice, stepping up to the policeman, and laying his hand

on his shoulder, "you can bet that this very old woman knows where Dorothy Donald is and I suggest that you force her to tell."

"That's what I'm going to do," he replied in a low tone, "I'm going to let her tell it herself. She'll tell it before she thinks." And turning to Mrs. Miller he continued, "But you have not told me how you get your money so easy."

"Why, Thomas gives it to me," she replied, tossing her head.

"And who is this Thomas?"

"He's the kind gentleman that lives up stairs in that fine room."

"May I ask why he is not in to-day?"

"He's gone from the city."

"Where did he go?"

"I think he said he was going to London."

"How long has he been gone?" the officer asked carelessly.

"He left last night," she replied.

"And when is he coming back?"

"I don't know," she said.

"Mrs. Miller, is Thomas a married man?"

"No."

"Has he a mother or sister or any other woman relative who comes and stays with him sometimes?"

"No—not that I know of."

"Well, does he ever have any lady visitors?"

"No."

"Well, can you tell me how there came to be a lady's slipper in his room?"

"Likely as not it's mine. Mr. Thomas's little dog carries things around in his mouth and I guess he carried my slipper up to Mr. Thomas's room."

"Excuse me, but do you think you could get your foot in a shoe twice the size of that?"

"I don't know," she said, "I haven't seen the shoe."

"Mr. Rose," said Anderson, turning to the other policeman, "go bring the slipper. I should like to see Mrs. Miller put it on." Then turning to Mrs. Miller, he continued, "If the dog carried the slipper to Mr. Thomas's room can you tell me if the dog placed it on the dressing table?"

"No, I don't guess he did, but I reckon Mr. Thomas did."

"It looks like the gentleman would have brought the slipper down to your room."

"I guess he thought if I wanted it I was able to come after it. I've got enough of your questions now, and I'd thank you to leave me alone."

"Excuse me, Mrs. Miller, but I don't think I shall leave the house yet, and besides, I'm not through with all my questions."

The other man now returned with the slipper and Mr. Anderson turned to Mrs. Miller.

"You would oblige me greatly by trying this slipper on."

"That's not my slipper," she said. "Why, I can't begin to get my foot in that. Why, that's a child's. Likely as not Mr. Thomas found it and just brought it on to his room."

"No, this is no child's slipper. It is a number three, ladies' slipper, but if you can not tell me anything concerning the slipper, you can at least tell me why Mr. Thomas gives you money whenever you ask him."

"Because I work and earn it," she replied.

"What kind of work do you do?"

"That's none of your business and I'll not answer another of your questions. You may as well go on about your business—if you've got any, and leave me to myself."

"Mrs. Miller, I have told you what I would do if you did not answer all my questions, and I shall keep my word."

"Arrest me then," she said, "but I'll not tell you."

"Well," he continued, "as I care more about the information you can give me than to arrest you, I'll see if I can't persuade you to tell me," and taking a revolver from his pocket he leveled it at her. "Now, Mrs. Miller, will you answer my questions?"

"Oh, ye dirty scoundrels, to come here four at a time and take the advantage of a poor old woman. Are you going to stand there gaping and let the man shoot me?" she cried to the three other men.

"Answer my questions and I won't shoot, and remember I don't want any lies."

"Ask your questions, then," she said sullenly. "I don't want to have my brains blowed out."

"Well, promise that you won't tell any lies," said the policeman.

"I've promised," she said, "but take that thing out of my face. I can't talk when I'm looking for my head to be blowed off at any minute."

He lowered the revolver but still kept it in his hand. "Tell me what kind of work you've been doing for Mr. Thomas."

"I washed for him."

"I know he would not give you all the money you asked for just for washing," the policeman replied. "If you do not tell what he pays you such a high price for, I'll have to use this persuader."

"Well, if I've got to tell, I kept boarders for him."

"Were they lady or gentlemen boarders?"

"They wasn't either."

"Well, if they were neither ladies or gentlemen, what were they?"

"They was gals," she said snappishly. "Now you've got it, I hope your easy."

"How many girls have you kept here for him?"

"Lor', I don't know," she said, "lots of 'em."

"Did they not ask you to let them go?"

"Yes," she admitted, "but what did I care for their asking? I'm an old woman. I have to get money some way and I got money for keeping them."

"Has Miss Donald been a prisoner in this house for the last week?"

"Oh! mercy," cried the old woman, as she looked wildly about, "Mr. Thomas will kill me if I tell so much."

"And I'll kill you if you don't. Has Miss Donald been a prisoner in this house, I say?"

"Yes," she said, slowly, "yes."

"O God, help her!" muttered Rupert.

"Do you mean to say she was in this house yesterday when I was here?" Kenton asked, wheeling upon her.

"Yes," said the old woman as she laughed harshly, "but she's not here now."

"Where has he taken the girl?" the policeman asked.

"I don't know no more than you, only he said he was going to London. I guess he took her there."

"Well, it won't do to stay here, if Dorothy is in London. Let us go there and find her," Rupert said desperately. "Oh! my dear little Dorothy!"

"Yes, we may as well go," said the policeman. "I'll settle with this woman later."

Kenton and Rupert secured a detective and put him to work on the case. Then they telegraphed Mrs. Lorrimer that they had gained valuable information and at once set out for London.

But what could they do in such a city as London? But do all they could, they could find no traces of Dorothy. She was as utterly lost to them as she was before they came to London.

Rupert and Kenton were almost distracted. One day when they were talking of Dorothy, Rupert said, "Kenton, I have a great secret to tell you."

"I'm ready to hear it," Kenton replied, "go on with it."

"Kenton, I love Dorothy. I never would tell you before, but I tell you now because I think I should. I love her."

"Well, Rupert," Kenton replied, "I'm not surprised at all. Daphne has told me all along that you were in love with Dorothy. And if she had not told me, I could have guessed it myself. But, Rupert, we will find Dorothy, and she will not be disgraced, for I am sure she would fight to the last for her honor."

"I've no doubt of this, Kenton," he replied sadly, "but what could a weak girl like Dorothy do in the hands of a villain."

"True," said Kenton, "she is weak, but I cannot but believe she will come out winner. Dorothy is a girl who generally does what she undertakes and I'm sure she will come out all right in that respect, but we will have more trouble yet in finding her."

"I will find her, though I lose my life in the attempt," Rupert replied.

"And I will stand by you," Kenton replied. "We will find Dorothy before we leave this city."

CHAPTER XXII

Mrs. Miller, having found a doctor, soon returned with him to her house. He dressed Thomas's wound, and said it was not serious, only a flesh wound, and the patient would be able to be up in a few days. Thomas stayed with Mrs. Miller so that she might dress the wound every day, and in a few days he was able to be up, but he had not entirely recovered.

On the evening that Kenton came to Mrs. Miller's, Thomas was sitting by the window wondering if he felt well enough to climb the steps to Dorothy's room, when, looking out, he saw Kenton just coming up toward the house.

"Mrs. Miller," he said, "it will never do for me to be seen here. Is there no place where you could conceal me till after that man is gone? Hurry up—he is almost here."

"Yes," she said. "You get in this closet, and I'll shut the door, and he will never know you are there!"

He went to the closet, opened the door and stepped in, and Mrs. Miller closed the door after him. Kenton, then came in and Thomas listened to the conversation carried on between him and Mrs. Miller. He was frightened and angry when he heard Kenton tell Mrs. Miller that he believed she had a hand in stealing Dorothy. He was afraid the old woman should so far forget herself, as to say

something that would lead Kenton to think that Dorothy was then in the house.

It was with great feelings of relief that he heard Kenton leave the room. Mrs. Miller then opened the door and Thomas came out of the closet.

"Mrs. Miller, it won't do for me to stay here, or to let the girl stay here another night. I am going to London tonight, and take her with me. I can't stay here and have the officers catch me just on account of this little wound in my side. I'm afraid I will have trouble in getting the girl to leave, but I will take her dead or alive."

He then went out and hired a carriage which was to be at the back entrance of the house by dark that night. Although it was near eight o'clock before he went up to Dorothy, he entered the room without knocking. Dorothy was sitting on the sofa and had pulled one slipper off, setting it on the dressing table, and was just about taking the other off when the man entered so unceremoniously. Before she was aware of his intention Thomas had seized her and again placed a chloroformed handkerchief to her nose and mouth, and lifted her in his arms. He carried her to the carriage, lifting her in, then sprang in beside her, and told the man to drive on.

It was about forty miles from the town of S——, and consequently they did not reach London until the following morning at ten o'clock. The horses were almost exhausted with their long and hurried journey. Dorothy was beginning to revive, but

Thomas had his mind on something else, and did not notice this. She opened her eyes and saw that he was not looking at her, she closed them again quickly, as the thought came to her, that possibly she might escape, when he was thinking of it the least.

The carriage stopped in front of a tall brick building and Thomas got out. Still Dorothy showed no sign of awaking. Thomas lifted her and started with her toward the house, when the driver called to him that he guessed he had better settle with him before he left. Thomas again placed Dorothy in the carriage, so as to get his hands free to get the money for the man. Dorothy thought that now was her chance of escape if ever, and waiting until Thomas was counting out the money, she uttered a piercing scream, "Save me!" and jumped from the carriage.

An old gentleman was just passing and Dorothy ran straight toward him crying at every breath, "Save me, oh, save me!"

Ben Thomas started after Dorothy, throwing his purse down in his haste. The man in the carriage snatched this and drove away, but Thomas did not notice this, he was so intent upon overtaking Dorothy. But when he saw that she would reach the old gentleman before he could reach her, he pulled a revolver from his pocket and fired. Dorothy fell to the pavement, and a policeman then came up and after a struggle with Thomas, he succeeded in getting a pair of handcuffs on the villain.

The old gentleman lifted Dorothy, and calling a passing cab he placed her in it, and getting in, he told the man to drive to No. — Beacon street, with all speed. When he reached there, he lifted Dorothy from the cab, and as luck would have it, a doctor was just passing. Calling him in, the old gentleman told him to do what he could for Dorothy, telling him how it all happened. Then, looking at Dorothy, the old gentleman muttered, "I've seen this girl before. Why, she is the very picture of my little sister dead so many years ago."

The doctor examined Dorothy's wound and told the old man she must have a skilled nurse or she would not recover, as the bullet had entered her shoulder, and she must have careful nursing. The old gentleman replied that she should have a nurse and everything else she needed, for he had more money than he knew how to make use of, and would as soon spend it for this poor girl as not, and a little rather, because she was so like his sister. So a competent nurse was procured to take care of Dorothy.

When Dorothy saw the old gentleman standing over her, she recognized him as the old gentleman whom she and Kenton had seen in the waiting room, the evening she ran away from Mrs. Miller.

"Oh! where is that man?" she cried. "Surely you will not let him get me!"

The old man then told her what had happened. "Shall I ever recover?" she asked. "Tell me. I should not be afraid to die. I only wanted to tell you to tell my friends what has happened."

"No, I don't think you will die," he said, "but you must not talk any more now."

Dorothy soon fell asleep, and when she awoke she saw a kind-faced woman dressed as a nurse bending over her.

She was on the point of speaking, when the woman put her finger to her lips, and said, "You must not talk any. I'll answer your questions without your asking them, for I know exactly what you want to know. My name is Sister Mary, and if you do not talk any or exert yourself in any other way, you will soon be much better, so shut your eyes and go to sleep again."

Dorothy closed her eyes, but it was a good while before she went to sleep again. She was thinking of her home and her friends, and of the trouble she had gone through the past week. She was thankful though to be out of the hands of Ben Thomas, even in the condition she was then in, lying in the house of a stranger, seriously wounded. Though they tried to make her think she would be well in a few days, she knew that she could not. She wondered if Mrs. Lorrimer had sent for Kenton, and if he was looking for her, and she wondered too if Rupert was helping Kenton. While she was thinking of them, she thought of Essie, and how lonely it would be for her without her sister Dorothy.

The same evening that Dorothy lay thinking of them, Essie and Mrs. Lorrimer received the telegram from Kenton saying that they had received

valuable information, and would set out for London that night.

"Oh! God grant that they may find our little Dorothy," Mrs. Lorrimer said, tearfully. "How I miss her sunny face and merry laughter. It almost seems that there had been a death in the family."

"Yes," Essie replied, "it is very lonely without Dorothy. It seems that it is unlucky for me to tell any one I cannot do without them, for just as sure as I do they are taken from me. I told Claude I could not do without him, and I have discovered that I can when I am compelled to. And the other day I told Dorothy I could not do without her, and she is also taken from me. I shall never tell any one else that, no matter how strong I think it. It seems that almost every one I learn to love very dearly is taken from me."

"But let us hope that both of those dear ones will return," Mrs. Lorrimer said, trying to appear cheerful, "and perhaps, when the clouds all vanish, and Claude and Dorothy are given back to us, we shall be happy once more. But we should be happy, dear, that we have each other," she continued. "Suppose that you had been taken from me, when you were so ill. What a lonely time it would be for me now!"

"I am thankful that my life was spared for the reason that you will not be so lonely now, and for another, that I can meet Claude again in this world."

CHAPTER XXIII

Four days went slowly by before Dorothy was allowed to talk with any one for any length of time. But the nurse said one day that she was so much better and was so anxious to express her gratitude to the kind old gentleman, she would let her do so. The old man entered the room softly and came up to Dorothy's bed.

"Before I try to thank you," said she, "I should like so much to know the name of one who has been so kind to me."

"My name is Joseph West," he replied.

"Joseph West," she repeated. "Well, Mr. West, I hardly know how to begin to thank you for saving me from that miserable man. Had it not been for your kindness, God only knows what my fate would have been."

"I will tell you what I would appreciate more than thanks," he replied.

"What is that?" she asked. "It shall be as you say, if it lies in my power."

"Do not try to thank me then," he said. "I do not want any thanks. It was a pleasure to me, to save an innocent girl. Do not try to thank me but talk to me of yourself."

Dorothy then told him the story of her life, as far back as she could remember, dwelling longest on the kindness of the Lorrimer family. She also told him that it was she and Kenton whom he had seen in the waiting room in the town of S——, and

asked him if he did not remember them. He replied that he did, and that she must have thought him a queer old "sardine" to stare at her so. But the reason, he said, why he did this was because she was so like his sister. He then said. "You have not yet told me your name."

"My name is Dorothy Donald," she replied.

"Dorothy Donald," he repeated. "Dorothy Donald?" as he gazed at her in astonishment. "Why, Donald was the name of the man my sister married," and bending over he gazed at her curiously.

"You do look so much like my little sister, Anna! Can it be that you are her child? Did your mother leave you no letter or anything telling you who her parents were?"

"No," Dorothy replied, sadly, "if she did, I never saw, or heard of it. But if she had, I think it doubtful if Mrs. Miller would have kept it for me."

The old man would look at Dorothy closely for a few moments, then he would gaze out the window as if he were lost in thought. He sat so for some time.

Suddenly he said: "Can you remember anything at all about your mother? Do you remember how she looked? Are you anything like her?"

"I remember very little about her," she said; "but it seems that I have a recollection of a sweet face bending over me, a face with brown hair, and beautiful gray eyes. Mrs. Miller used to tell me that I was the very picture of my mother."

"I am almost sure you are Anna's child," he said.

"I have a picture of her when she was just eighteen. I'll go get it and see if you can remember enough about your mother to see if that is like her."

He left the room and returned in a few moments with the picture of a beautiful girl with large gray eyes and brown curls and so like Dorothy that the picture might have been taken for Dorothy's.

"Does the picture look anything like your mother?" the old man asked.

"I cannot remember very well how she looked, but from what I can remember, I should say it does."

"What was your mother's name before marriage?" he asked.

"I do not know," Dorothy replied. "I was too small to ask any questions or for her to tell me anything about it. Mrs. Miller, when speaking of her, always called her Anna Donald."

"Was her name Anna?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, I think it was, or that is what Mrs. Miller always called her," she repeated.

"I am sure you are my sister's child," he said, "for her name was Anna, and our mother's name was Dorothy. I am sure you were named for her. Oh! Dorothy," the old man said, "do you think you will ever love your poor old uncle?"

"I'm sure I shall," she replied, "for I love you now. Can it be that you are really my uncle?"

"I have not the least doubt but that I am," he replied. "You are enough like my sister to prove this, even without all this other proof. Call me Uncle

Joseph," he said pleadingly. "Let me hear it from your lips."

"Well, dear Uncle Joseph," she said as she put her arms about the old man's neck, "I am so glad, so very glad I have found you, for I did not think I had a relative in the world."

"And I am glad I found you," he said, "for now it will not seem so lonely, for of course you will stay with your poor old lonely Uncle Joseph."

"I should be glad to," she replied sadly, "but I am afraid I cannot. It would not be doing Mrs. Lorri-mer justice to desert her now that I am large enough to be of some help to her. I think I shall go back to her. Forgive me, Uncle Joseph, if this seems unkind after all your trouble you have taken for me."

"No, no," the old man said, very sadly; "I cannot blame you, for you are doing just the right thing, child. They have done more for you than I've ever done."

Oh! you are a dear, good old uncle," she said, clasping his hand. "I can never repay you for your kindness to me. Oh!" she said, and she trembled violently, "how it frightens me to think of that man! But, Uncle Joseph, I must write to Mrs. Lorrimer, or mamma, as I call her, immediately, and tell her where I am, for I am sure they are greatly alarmed over my sudden disappearance."

"Well, you must make your letter very short," said the nurse, "for I fear you will overtask yourself. If you are careful I think you can sit up by the day after tomorrow."

"I shall be very careful," Dorothy replied. "I shall write only enough to tell them where I am, but I must do that. I ought to have done so long ago."

The nurse brought her writing materials and in a very few minutes Dorothy had the letter written. She did not tell them any of the particulars, only that she had been ill, but was much better now and would be able to come home in a few days.

Mr. West went to post the letter, and when he returned he said to Dorothy, "Perhaps you would like to hear why I lost sight of my sister for so many years."

"Yes," said Dorothy, "if you do not mind telling me, I should like to know ever so much." And the old man told her the story.

"Sister Anna's was a very impulsive nature. She was quick to make friends with any one, and when she was a friend she was a friend in the highest sense of the word. She would fight their battles as though they were her own, and would remain loyal and true to them, come what might. When she first met Ralph Donald she was sixteen, and he was her music teacher. They fell in love with each other and he asked her to marry him and she consented. He then, like an honorable gentleman, asked my father for her hand. He objected, for he was a very proud and haughty man. I was proud, too, but I think I am about over all that now. I have almost grieved my life away because I let my sister go away without ever telling her that I forgave her. She was just

seventeen when she became betrothed to Ralph Donald, and she pleaded with my father to consent to their marriage. He would not. He told her he had rather see her in her coffin than the wife of Ralph Donald. This almost broke her heart, for she loved Ralph more than all the world. She remained with us two years pleading with father to give his consent, and at last she told him she loved Ralph and would marry him, for she had given her promise, and, though she was sorry to disobey him, she meant to keep her promise to Ralph. Father grew angry at this and told her, if she did, he would disinherit her. Anna kissed him and throwing her arms about his neck she pleaded with him once again to give his consent, but he was stubborn and proud to the last. The next morning when we awoke Anna had eloped with her lover, and on the following morning we read of her marriage to Ralph Donald. Mother entreated father to forgive her, but he would not. Mother soon died of grief and on her deathbed she begged my father to send for Anna, that she might see her once again. I joined my entreaties with mother's but that did no good. Father said she should never come in his house again, and mother died with a prayer on her lips, that as she could never see her child again on earth, that she might meet her in Heaven. Two years after this my father died and since then I have been searching for Anna in every part of England. That was my business in the town of S—— the day I first saw you. When I saw you that day you looked so

much like her that I came near calling you Anna. After you were gone I regretted that I did not ask your name. I could not keep my eyes from your face that day, you looked so like my sister. And so dear little Anna is gone," he said sadly, "without a forgiving word from either father, mother or brother. I shall try to atone for some of the wrong I did her, by seeing that her child shall never want."

There were tears in Dorothy's eyes when Mr. West ceased speaking.

"That is a very sad story, Uncle Joseph," she said.

Then she picked up the picture again and murmured, "That is why those beautiful gray eyes have such a mournful look."

CHAPTER XXIV

Mrs. Lorrimer received Dorothy's letter next day after it was written and when she opened it she gave a loud cry of pleasure.

"Oh!" she cried, "Dorothy is safe!"

"Where is she?" cried Essie, springing up.

"She is in London," Mrs. Lorrimer replied, and read the letter aloud. When she had finished reading, Essie said,

"Oh! mamma, what do you suppose can have happened to her?"

"God only knows what the poor child has been through these three weeks," she replied. "Kenton must know at once."

She sat down and wrote Kenton a few words, enclosed Dorothy's letter with hers and then went to post it.

Kenton received the letter the following day.

"You surely have good news," Rupert cried, "from your looks, Kenton! Is Dorothy found?"

"Yes, yes,—Dorothy is found," he replied. "Just read this," passing the letter over to him.

"Do let us go to her at once, Kenton," said Rupert, when he had read it. "Poor little Dorothy! I wonder what has happened to her?"

"Come along, Kenton. Don't let us lose a moment. No. — Beacon street," he said, "why we would never have found her, that is over on the other side of the city."

They left the room, and hailing a passing cab they

drove to Beacon street. A maid answered the bell, and ushered them into the library to wait the appearance of Mr. West.

They did not have long to wait. As he came into the room Kenton and Rupert rose, and Kenton at once recognized him as the old gentleman of the waiting room. He advanced toward them and shaking hands with them heartily he bade them be seated.

"Is this the place where Dorothy Donald is staying?" Kenton asked. "We have just received a letter from her stating that she is here, and has had a very narrow escape from death."

"Yes, she is here," Mr. West replied, "she is just able to sit up this morning. Would you like to see her?"

"Very much," Kenton replied, eagerly.

"Then come this way, please," the old gentleman said, leading the way to the room that Dorothy occupied.

Mr. West told them to wait at the door while he told Dorothy who wished to see her. Returning in a few minutes he ushered them into her room. It was a joyful meeting, and for a while they all talked at once, the boys looking at Dorothy all the time and asking questions. There was much for Dorothy to tell, and when she ended by telling them that Mr. West was no other than her uncle, Kenton and Rupert could not express their surprise in words.

"That reminds me of a paper Mr. Anderson found

in Mrs. Miller's house," Kenton said, taking the paper from his pocket and passing it to Dorothy.

She read it and passed it to Mr. West.

"Read this," she said, eagerly. "I suppose there's not the least doubt now but that you are my uncle."

When Mr. West had finished reading, there were tears in his eyes.

"To think my only sister should die away from all her friends and in the most wretched of places, while I have more money than I can make use of! Oh! my poor little sister, my poor little sister! She knew I would be kind to her child, for my sister's sake! Indeed I will, God helping me. I will try to expiate the great wrong done her."

When the old man ceased speaking Kenton told them how the policeman had forced Mrs. Miller to tell where Dorothy was, and when Kenton was through with that, Rupert said, "I declare, Dorothy, you are a real heroine! My! but you have pluck! You used those scissors splendidly!"

"That is what I meant to do, if he molested me," she replied. "I was determined to take my own part."

"You did not fail in taking your own part," Kenton said. "I don't think I could have done so well with nothing but a pair of scissors, and I agree with Rupert, you are a real little heroine."

"Well," said Dorothy, laughing, "if I am the heroine, Uncle Joseph is the hero. Had it not been for him, I should not have escaped from the wretch as soon as I did."

"Why, I am no hero," said Mr. West, falteringly; "when you ran, and he shot you, all I could do was to stand and look on; then I brought you here. Now I do not call that anything like a hero."

"Why, Uncle Joseph," said Dorothy, looking at him lovingly, "you are a dear old hero for being on the spot at just the right moment."

Rupert's face had grown dark with rage when Mr. West had said that the man had shot Dorothy, and he muttered, "I'll kill that man, so help me Heaven!"

Dorothy grew pale and she entreated Rupert to let it all go, since she was alive.

"Do not ask me not to," Rupert said. "Dorothy, I mean to shoot that base scoundrel down like a dog."

Then, after a while Kenton made an excuse for Mr. West and himself to leave the room, as he knew that Rupert wished to be alone with Dorothy.

When they had left the room Rupert took Dorothy's hand in both his own, and said, "Dear little hand, how white and thin it has grown. I love this little hand, Dorothy, and to think I came so near losing it."

Dorothy flushed, turned her head and looked out the window, Rupert still holding her hand. There was silence for a moment or two, then Rupert said, "Look at me, Dorothy."

Dorothy turned her head and looked straight into his love-lit eyes. Then her lids drooped shyly, and she said, "Why must I look at you, Rupert?"

"Because I love you," he said, "because I like you to look at me that way. When you look at me in that way, Dorothy, my heart gives a great bound and I wonder if it is not love I see in those beautiful gray eyes. Is it Dorothy? Do you love me? You know and have known for a long time that I love you more than any one else in the world."

"No, I did not know it," she said. "Do you really love me? You, who will one day be an earl, love a little street-waif like me? You cannot mean that,—that would be too good to be true."

"That is just what I mean to say," he replied, "that I love you. But when I love you, I am not loving a street-waif, but the very sweetest, dearest little girl in the world."

"If I am not a waif now, I was before Kenton found me."

"It makes no difference to me what you have been," he replied. "It is what you are today. And, Dorothy, I want to know if you love me? Do you, Dorothy? Won't you promise me that some day you will be my wife? Won't you promise me this, Dorothy?" pleadingly. "Won't you tell me you love me? Ah! I see that you will not answer me,—you do not love me!"

"I do love you, Rupert, and think I have ever since the day I first met you. I have never loved any one else."

"Do you," he said, "really love me?" and he gave her hand a tender pressure.

"Forgive me, dear," he said, as she tried to with-

draw her hand, "I will let go of your hands, if you will just tell me that again."

"No," she said teasingly, "once is enough for anybody to tell another that, especially when it affects them as it does you."

"You don't mean to tell me that you won't allow me to tell you I love you any more?"

"Oh! no," she said, and laughed. "I only meant that once was enough for a girl to tell that story. Boys have the advantage of girls; they can tell it as often as they please."

"Now, I don't agree with you there," he said, "I think it as fair on one side as the other. But we'll discuss that at a more opportune time, for Mr. West and Kenton will come in here pretty soon and you have not answered my question yet."

"What was the question?" she said, trying to look demure. "I think I've forgotten."

"You little dear," he said, "you know you haven't forgotten. But I'll tell you again. Will you be my wife one of these days,—when we are older?"

"I don't think I can," she said; "that would please you too well."

"I know it would," he said; "that is why I want you to tell me. Now, don't you think you would like to please me? Do please," he said as he heard Mr. West and Kenton open the door.

"Well, as I would like to see how you look when you are pleased, I suppose I must say yes."

"That's a dear."

Kenton and Mr. West now entered the room, and

looking first at Rupert, then at Dorothy, Kenton winked knowingly and said, "I can guess something that no one thinks I know."

Dorothy blushed and looked out the window, and Rupert said, "Just keep your guessing to yourself, or I might do some guessing, too." And he looked so happy that Kenton could not help saying, "Rupert, leave off trying to guess anything, you are too happy."

Mr. West did not seem to notice this conversation. He was gazing at Dorothy and his mind had gone back many years. But Kenton inquired how long it would be before Dorothy could go home, and Mr. West, starting, said he thought she could go in a week. Rupert and Kenton then took their leave, and when they were on the street Kenton said, as he looked knowingly at Rupert, "What did she say, Rue? But there is no need to ask, for I know from your looks what she said."

"I won't tell what she said," Rupert replied, "but I will tell you what I think. I think she is the dearest little girl in England or any other part of the globe, for that matter."

"That is answer enough," Kenton said. "Accept my congratulations," and gave Rupert's hand a hearty grasp.

CHAPTER XXV

Kenton and Rupert stayed in London until Dorothy was well enough to go home. They went to see her every day and Mr. West said he thought their visits did more good than the physician. And when, the following Sunday, they started for Rossville, they all insisted that Mr. West accompany them.

Rupert had telegraphed his father to send a carriage to the station to meet them, and when they reached Rossville, the carriage was waiting and they drove to Mrs. Lorrimer's. As soon as Dorothy could release herself from Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie, she introduced Mr. West as her rescuer. Mrs. Lorrimer seized his hand, and thanked him so earnestly that Mr. West was completely overcome, and when Dorothy told Mrs. Lorrimer that she had found Mr. West was her mother's only brother, she was very glad to welcome him.

Mr. West stayed until the following morning and then returned to London, happy in the thought that he had found his sister's child, but sorry she could not stay with him, and brighten his old age. Kenton and Rupert returned to Eton, after staying at home for a week, glad to think they had only one more term of school.

Dorothy told Essie that she had promised to marry Rupert some day and Essie said, with a sad, sweet smile, "Oh! yes, Miss Dorothy, what did I tell you?"

Then Essie's face assumed that sad, lonely look, as she put her arms about Dorothy, and kissing her, she said, "I hope you will never be parted from your lover, Dorothy, as I have been from mine. I wish you all the happiness that you deserve for being such a dear little comforter in this lonely life of mine."

"Thank you," Dorothy replied, "but, Essie, I am parted from him now."

"But not for a great length of time," Essie replied. "He will be gone only a few months, and it is almost four years since Claude went away. Think of that, Dorothy, four long, lonely, dreary years, since he went away and left me. I don't think I shall ever care for money, for it was for the sake of money he went away."

"No, no," Dorothy said, "do not say that. He did not go for the sake of money. He went for your sake; he went to get the money for your sake."

"Yes, you are right, Dorothy, as you always are," Essie replied, "and I am wrong. But it seems to me sometimes as if I could not wait another day. If he does not come in one more year I shall cease to look for him."

"Now you must not do that, either," Dorothy replied. "As long as there is life, there is hope. He said he would come back to you, and I am sure he will, though it should be twenty years."

Then Mrs. Lorrimer came into the room, and Dorothy said, "Mamma, what do you suppose our little girl here has been saying?"

"I cannot imagine," Mrs. Lorrimer replied.

"She said, if Claude did not come in at least one more year, she would cease to look for him. I told her that Claude would come back; and, mamma, don't you think so too?"

"Most assuredly he will," she said, "and you must not think that he will not."

"I do hope and pray that he will," Essie said sadly. "But sometimes I think he will never come. I shall endeavor to think he will come. If he should never come I know it would be no fault of his. But we might die, you know."

"That is all imagination," said Dorothy. "Come along with me, for a walk, and forget all those nonsensical thoughts. We will gather flowers and listen to the happy little birds singing. I do love the dear little birds, they always seem so light-hearted and happy, so very unlike my little pet bird here," smiling significantly at Essie, "who is always so gloomy, and who permits her thoughts to run away with her."

* * * *

It was the first of November. Kenton, Rupert and Daphne were again at home.

Kenton had not told Daphne of his love for her, but it could be read, in every look and word, every smile and clasp of the hand. All could see this except Daphne herself. She had never thought for a moment that Kenton was in love with her, but she knew she loved him, and often wondered if her affection would ever be returned?

One day when she and Kenton were together,

he whispered to her that his heart was hers, and asked if it were possible that she could ever learn to love him?

"Ever learn to love you?" she said. "Why, Kenton, I learned that years ago. I think I have loved you ever since the day you saved my life,—when I opened my eyes and saw you standing over me, with such a loving, pitying look in your beautiful eyes. I discovered long ago that I loved you more than any one else, even more than Rupert, and I have wondered many times if you would ever care for me."

"Oh! Daphne," he said, joyfully, "this is more than I expected. If I had ever thought you loved me, I should have told you long ago. For I think I have loved you since that first day we met. No matter where I was or what I was doing, I was thinking of you. And I fear that my love will be my sorrow. You cannot marry me, only a poor boy, with nothing to look forward to, and you an earl's daughter."

"An earl's daughter," she repeated. "Do you suppose for a moment, that would make any difference with me? Do you not know, Kenton, I think that honor comes before all else, and do I not know that you are honor itself? I would marry you just as soon, being an earl's daughter, as if I were a beggar."

"Oh! Daphne, do you mean to say you will marry me just as I am?"

"No, I did not mean to say that," she replied, "for you have not yet asked me to marry you."

"Well, if I should ask you, what would your answer be?" he continued, bending over so as to look in her eyes.

"I won't tell you what I would say," she replied. "For I do not want you to know until you ask me, if you ever do."

"Well," he said, "I mean to ask you then and see what your answer will be. Will you marry me, Daphne? I don't mean any time soon, but in some two or three years. Will you be my wife then?"

"What if I should tell you no," she said. "What would you do?"

"I should go away, where I would never see your face again, for I could not bear to look at you. Oh, Heaven, Daphne, I could not endure that!"

"Well," she continued, "what if I should say yes."

"Just say yes," he replied, as his face brightened, "and then you will see."

"Well, yes, then," she said, glancing shyly at him.

"Do you really mean to say you will one day be my wife?" he said, as he clasped her hand.

"I really meant to say I will one day be your wife," she repeated, "and be proud to bear your name."

"God bless you, my little Daphne!" he said. "How I love you for those words! I know I am not handsome, Daphne, and have nothing to offer you but love. But I'll tell you now, you will never

find another who loves you as I do. But, Daphne, do you suppose Lord and Lady Ross will ever give their consent?"

"I think perhaps papa will," she replied, "I hardly know what to think about mamma. I am almost sure she will not. But, Kenton, I love you, and I mean to marry you, come what may, and when mamma discovers that I am determined, perhaps she will give her consent. If she does not, I will not break my promise to you Kenton, though I should be compelled to run away from home. I mean to tell mamma when I go home, what I have promised you today and hear what she has to say about it."

"I should like to be behind a curtain when you tell her and hear what she has to say," Kenton replied.

"I will wager she will be in a towering rage," said Daphne, "but that will make no difference to me. I am accustomed to that. For my part, I do not mind her angry spells in the least. But, Rupert,—my, how angry he does get sometimes when mamma begins to talk of poor people! I may as well tell you, Kenton, she does not like poor people. Do you know, Kenton, I would give the world to exchange places with some poor girl, for I sometimes think they are the happiest people in the world."

"And so Lady Ross does not like poor people," Kenton said. "Why have you not told me before, Daphne. And I would never have troubled her ladyship with my presence at the Hall."

"Because I suspected that. I knew if I told you mamma did not like you, you would not come to the Hall any more, and I could not bear that. But now the reason I told you was this. There is no danger of me losing you now, for you are going to be my husband some day, and now that I have that claim on you, you cannot well get away from me. Do you see?" she said, playfully. "I was very cunning, I waited until I had ensnared my bird, then informed him of his danger," and she laughed gaily.

"Well," said Kenton, "you should have told me of this long ago. But if you love me, I don't really think I would care if the rest of the world hated me, for your love is more precious to me than all else. So long as you remain true to me, I shall be happy."

"Well, then," she said, "you may rest assured that you will always be happy, for I shall love you all my life."

"And you will be a little dear to do so," he replied. "But, Daphne, are you very sure that, under your mother's influence, you will not be led to dislike me?"

"No, Kenton," she replied, "if that had been possible I would have learned to dislike you, long ago. You may rest easy on that subject. The more she censures you, the more I love you. I cannot tell why I am that way. But I am, for I know she is greatly mistaken. I suppose that is the reason."

"Well," he replied with a sigh, "I hope she will

continue in the same way if that is the case. I am sure I want you to love me more every day."

"I do that anyway," she said. "Each day that goes by, I love you more and more, and I sometimes wonder when that love will ever cease."

"I hope it will never cease," he said.

"I know I shall always love you," she replied; "but I was thinking, I should love you to the fullest extent some day, and if I should do that, of course I could not love you any more then."

"Oh, yes; I comprehend your meaning now," he said; "but, Daphne, when you are alone with your mother, and I will not be near, to take my own part, I fear the result."

"There's no need for you to fear anything of the kind, Kenton," she replied; "for have I not told you, that I would be true to you in all things?"

"I trust that you will," he replied. "For should I lose you now, I think I should go mad."

Rupert then came up to them, with Dorothy at his side, and told Daphne he thought it time to be going home. She consented and Kenton said aside to Daphne, "Shall I tell?" and she replied, "Of course, you must tell." Then he told Rupert and Dorothy of his great happiness and Rupert said, as he took Kenton's hand, "I would rather that Daphne would marry you, Kenton Lorrimer, than any one. But I fear there is trouble ahead. But I give you my word of honor, I shall do all that lies in my power to aid you."

Kenton thanked him and then Rupert and Daphne went home.

CHAPTER XXVI

When Rupert and Daphne reached the Hall, Daphne went at once to her mother.

"Mamma, I have something to tell you, which no doubt will displease you very much."

"Something about those paupers you and Rupert have been visiting this afternoon, I suppose," she said.

"Yes," said Daphne, "something about those 'paupers,' if you wish to call them that. I promised Kenton Lorrimer this afternoon that I would one day be his wife."

Lady Ross threw up her hands in astonishment.

"Daphne, are you in earnest about this, or are you jesting?"

"I never was more in earnest in my life, mamma. I have promised to be his wife, and I mean to keep my promise."

"You shall do nothing of the kind," Lady Ross replied. "The idea of my daughter marrying Kenton Lorrimer! He is not fit to be your servant. I would rather see you put in your grave than to see you the wife of Kenton Lorrimer."

"Well, mamma," Daphne replied, "you shall most certainly see one of those two things, and as for me not keeping my promise, time will prove that."

"You don't mean to say you would disobey your mother," said Lady Ross, "for the sake of this fellow—this cur!"

"I say, mamma, I should dislike to disobey you,

but if you will not give your consent, I shall be compelled to do so. And please do not call Kenton by such names, mamma, for I love him, and it almost breaks my heart to hear you talk of him in that way."

"'Love!' " said Lady Ross, with a sneer, "you are not old enough to understand the meaning of love."

"Mamma," said Daphne, "have you not told me many times that you had loved papa since you were fifteen years of age, and still you say I do not know the meaning of love. But I know I do, and some day I will show you what the meaning of true love is."

"You shall never marry this man, Daphne. You may as well give up thinking you will."

"The only thing that will keep us apart will be death."

"Death will not keep you apart, neither shall you marry him," Lady Ross replied haughtily. "For I mean that you shall marry Sir Lancelot Bradway. I have had him selected for you for several years. I am sure you will like him. He is handsome and is very wealthy."

"And the last, if nothing else, would serve to make me hate him," Daphne replied. "And, mamma, if I must be so firm, I say, I would not marry him if he was made of gold. I will marry for nothing but love, and I love Kenton Lorrimer and shall continue to love him. And I would not give him up for all the Sir Lancelots in England. Mamma, would you blight my life for the sake of gold?"

"No," she replied, "I do not want to blight your life, but I am sure if you will just think about this awhile you will change your mind. If you marry a wealthy man you will have all that you could wish for, and on the other hand, if you marry Kenton Lorrimer, you would live in poverty all your days."

"Mamma," Daphne replied, "look at the question this way. Suppose Kenton is poor. He cannot help that. I love him and he loves me. I am sure he would make a good, loving husband. I am sure he would be kind to me always. And if we were poor, we would be happy. We will not be so poor, after all, for at papa's death one-half of his money will come to me, and I am sure that will be sufficient for Kenton and me. I have no desire to be rich. Now here is the other side of the question. Suppose I should marry some wealthy man for his money. Do you think I would enjoy any of that money? Kenton's eyes are brighter than all the diamonds I could purchase with the hateful money. His heart is as true and good as gold, and his love is worth more to me than all the wealth in England. He has my heart, and do you think I could be otherwise than miserable as the wife of one man when my heart belonged to another? I would sooner be dead and at rest, for then I know I would be happy. I told Kenton I would marry him. I do not wish to disobey you, mamma, and I will never marry him without your consent. But I tell you this much, I shall never, no never marry anybody but Kenton Lorrimer. Oh! mamma," she cried, as she burst into

tears, "think of the time when you were young! How do you think you could have endured anything like this?"

"When I loved, I loved one that was worthy," Lady Ross replied sternly.

"So do I, mamma, and I love him just as much as you loved papa. If Kenton is not worthy of my love, then no one is, I know."

"Well, for that matter," Lady Ross said, "I know he cannot help being poor. If he could of course he would. Perhaps that is why he pretends to love you; he thinks he can get a fortune with you. But I tell you, Daphne Ross, if you are foolish enough to marry Kenton Lorrimer, not a penny of my money will you ever get. As for his being kind to you, I'm not so sure of that. Those eyes that you say shine so much like diamonds, are sparkling with wickedness. I would, as I said a moment ago, rather see you dead than his wife. I would rather die myself than see you his wife."

"Oh! mamma," said Daphne, "please, please do not talk like that! You are greatly mistaken in your opinion of Kenton; you do not know him. You have never heard him talk as much as I.

"It is you, foolish girl, who makes the mistake," she replied.

"I am not the only one who gives Kenton Lorrimer a good name," Daphne went on. "Every one likes him. Ask Rupert about Kenton; he can tell you; everybody in this part of the country that is acquainted with him will tell the same story; every

one gives him the same name, all but you. When he speaks of you it is in the highest terms of praise."

"What do I care for his praise?" she said, disdainfully. "What does it all amount to? You are deceived by that boy, Daphne. Some day you will see that I speak the truth."

"Mamma, I cannot agree with you. You do Kenton a great injustice. I will not argue with you any longer, for I see you are determined to have it your own way."

"All right, go away now and leave me alone," said her mother. "I have heard Kenton Lorrimer until I am sick of the name! But I wish to tell you one thing more, you shall not go to Mrs. Lorrimer's any more, neither can Kenton Lorrimer come here. Henceforth you must meet as strangers."

"Oh! mamma," she said, as she fell upon her knees by her mother's side, "do not deprive me of the only happiness I know! What will my life be, shut up here at the Hall. If I cannot see Kenton, I do not wish to see any one else."

"Well," said her ladyship, coldly, "you can please yourself as to that, Daphne. But I meant exactly what I said."

"Mamma," she said pleadingly, as the tears fell fast, "do have mercy."

"I have said it, Daphne, and I shall keep my word," she replied.

"O Heaven, have mercy!" Daphne murmured. "Mamma, may I see him just once more?"

"No," she replied sharply, "if it be in my power you shall never see him again."

"So be it then," Daphne said as she left the room. "Oh! God help me."

Daphne went straight to Rupert and told him what her mother had said. Rupert said he would go and see what effect his words would have on his haughty lady mother.

But he soon came back to Daphne, with his eyes flashing with anger, and said he had met with no better success than she had. But he said that he could tell her in a moment what he would do, if he were in her place,—that he would elope with Kenton Lorrimer before another day.

"No," said Daphne, "I will not do that; if mamma is cruel enough to treat me in this way, I shall try to endure it. But one thing I am sure of, Rupert," and she clinched her little hands so tightly that the nails almost brought the blood, "I shall never marry this Sir Lancelot. I would die first,—or Sir anybody else, for that matter. If I cannot have the one I love, I shall never marry."

"That's the way to talk, Daphne," Rupert replied. "Stick to that, and some day you will be Kenton Lorrimer's wife, for I mean to help you all I can."

"Rupert," she said, as she clasped her arms about his neck, "I love you, oh! so much for those words! I wonder what mamma will think and say when she finds that you mean to marry Dorothy."

"I have not the least idea," he replied, "and little do I care. With all due respect to my mother, I am

my own commander. I love mamma and would be sorry to disobey her, but I love Dorothy, too, more than all else in the world. If I were you, Daphne, I would be true to Kenton, no matter what mamma may say, and I will do all I can for you, I'll carry letters and bring them from Kenton to you, for I mean to go to Mrs. Lorrimer's just as often as ever."

"Yes," she said, "I must write Kenton and tell him what mamma said."

When she had written the letter she gave it to Rupert, who on the following day carried it to Kenton.

When Kenton read Daphne's letter he turned to Rupert. "Rupert, Daphne tells me that you are going to be our friend. Is it true? Do you mean to help us out?"

"Yes," said Rupert, "for I know Daphne loves you. I am sure she loves you as much as I love Dorothy, and were I in your place I should be glad to have a friend to aid me. And that is what I mean to be to you."

"Rupert," said Kenton, "I think you have the best heart a man ever had. Some day, if it ever lies in my power, I'll repay your kindness."

"Why, you have already done that very thing," Rupert replied. "You brought one of the dearest little girls in the world home with you, to be my wife. That repays a thousand times for all I can do for you."

CHAPTER XXVII

Kenton wrote a long letter in answer to Daphne, and, giving it to Rupert, he walked out of the house and down the road, busy with thoughts of the little girl he had loved from childhood. He was sure that Daphne would be true to him, but he would never marry her without her parents' consent. Would they ever give their consent? He was more miserable than he had ever been in all his life before. Oh, if he only had money! Daphne had said she would never marry another. He would go to work and she would wait for him until he should become a rich man. One more year at Eton, then he and Rupert would go into business as partners and probably in four or five years Lady Ross would change her opinion of him and give him Daphne. With this hope he turned about toward home.

When he reached there he met Rupert just coming out of the gate. They had a long talk and Kenton entered the house, thinking things looked very gloomy indeed, but satisfied that one day Daphne would be his wife.

The days went by until the time came around that they should again leave for Eton. Kenton was compelled to go without seeing Daphne, and this seemed very hard to both of them. Daphne was to remain at home, as she did not wish to go back to school in France. She had pleaded long and earnestly with her mother to let her see Kenton before he left, but Lady Ross remained firm upon that subject.

In the course of two or three months, Daphne's sorrow began to tell upon her. She began to droop and pine. Her merry voice was no longer heard laughing or singing, making the old Hall gay with the music. Lord Ross called her "nervous"; Lady Ross said she was "sick"; the servants called her "mighty queer"; but Mrs. Sullivan, to whom she had told her story, knew that it was love—faithful, undying love.

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It was spring again. The birds were returning and their sweet notes could be heard in woodland and meadow. Down in the valley they sang joyously, while the silvery brooks sparkled clear, and, bubbling over the stones, echoed the music of the little birds.

But none of this joy did Daphne see. Shut up in her room, she sat day after day, thinking of the dreary shadows that encompassed her, and of that loved one whom she feared she would never see again. Lady Ross grew alarmed as Daphne continued in this way; nothing that was done for her served to cheer her. Finally she told Lord Ross that the only thing left for them to do, was to travel, that this would probably bring Daphne back to her old self again. Lord Ross assented to this, for he loved Daphne more than all else.

They left the Hall to be gone until the following September. Daphne did not want to go, for this would separate her from her old friend, Mrs. Sullivan, the only one in whom she could confide. But

she went with them, quietly and sadly. Essie was as lovely as ever that spring, and Dorothy was as happy as the days are long. She received a letter from Rupert every week, and sang from morning to night. She chided Essie playfully for being so still, and teased Mrs. Lorrimer because she was as solemn as Essie. But how could Mrs. Lorrimer be happy when she knew that both her children were so very unhappy? The cottage would be a lonely place were it not for blithesome Dorothy.

It was about the middle of the following August, when, one morning, Dorothy received a telegram that her uncle, Joseph West, was dead. She was greatly grieved on hearing this, for she had learned to love the old man very much. Of course, she at once set out for London, to attend his burial, accompanied by Mrs. Lorrimer and Essie.

Directly after the burial, Mr. West's will was read. He left all his property to his dearly loved niece, Dorothy Donald. So it came about that the little ragged Dorothy was at last the beautiful and accomplished heiress, worthy to bear the name of Lady Ross, or of Lady anybody else.

She said she would like to have received this money sooner, so she could have gone with Daphne to France. But as she did not, she would not go alone, but would stay with her old friends. Now she would not be penniless when she married, and she was glad of the money for that reason. His lady mother could not say now that he married a penniless outcast. Rupert wrote that he was sorry

she had received so much money, for he always meant to marry a poor girl, but he supposed he would have to change his mind, for he was sure money would have no effect on her, that she would still be the same little Dorothy.

When Dorothy read Rupert's letter she exclaimed, "What a strange boy Rupert is! Do you know, Essie, he says he is sorry I am so wealthy because he has always said he would marry a poor girl, but he says he supposes he would have to change his mind."

"Well," said Essie, "that proves he is honorable and true, and you should love him the more for saying that. Suppose you had never received all this money, you would have been just plain little Dorothy Donald and it would have made no difference with him."

"Well," she replied, "I am just plain little Dorothy Donald anyway, so where's the difference? But I do love him for saying that, for I am sure I would not marry a man that was only marrying me for my money. Poor Uncle Joseph! Had I known he would have died so soon I would have stayed with him, then I could have come back to you. But I did not, and I shall try to not grieve about it. But I do wish I could have seen Uncle Joseph once more in life. But now he has met with mother, I fancy I can see them walking hand in hand, just as Uncle Joseph told me he and mother used to walk together when they were children. Just think of it, Essie, I haven't a relative in this wide, wide world! But

I have friends that seem as dear to me as if they were relatives, for you seem as a very dear sister to me, Essie."

"You also seem like a very dear sister to me, Dorothy," Essie replied, "and I think I love you next to Claude."

"And now, Essie," Dorothy said, "as you are off on that subject again, I want to ask you something. I don't like to remind you of him, when you do let your mind get on something else for a moment. But how long has Claude been gone?"

"It wants only two months of being five years, Dorothy, and how I have lived I shall never know. Had it not been for you, I don't think I could have lived. Oh! I do wonder when Claude will come? It looks like he would come some time between this and Christmas."

"Oh! don't you hope he will," Dorothy exclaimed. "I'm just dying to see him."

"If you feel so, Dorothy, how do you suppose it is with me?"

"Well," Dorothy replied, "I guess you are the same way, only I know you are more anxious than I. It's only natural that you should be. But he's coming soon, so put on a smile and look happy, just like you mean to look when Claude comes home."

Essie smiled faintly at this and said that she did not know how she would look when Claude came, but she knew how she would feel.

"And Uncle Roger," continued Dorothy, "I have heard his praises sung until I am almost as anxious

to see him as Claude! I wonder if he will come with Claude?"

"Yes," Essie replied, "I think he will, for Claude said he would do his best to get him to return with him. But, Dorothy, when will that be! I have almost given up all hopes.

"Don't give up hopes, Essie," she replied, "for I will wager that before another year rolls by, Claude will come home."

"I hope what you say may prove true," she replied, "for Heaven knows, I'm weary and heartsick with waiting so long for my darling, so far over the sea."

CHAPTER XXVIII

It was October again. The leaves had assumed their colors of scarlet and brown, and had covered the old earth as with a carpet of many colors. Lord and Lady Ross were at home again, but little good had their travels done Daphne. She was just the same sad-faced little girl she was when she went away,—a little paler and thinner perhaps.

But on the day of which I am writing, she seemed more cheerful than usual. For Rupert was to come home the next day. He and Kenton had at last finished their Eton course and were now coming home to stay, and great preparations were going on at the Hall for Rupert's return. Daphne had been gathering flowers all day, and had placed them in his room, for Rupert was very fond of flowers. When her work was complete, she stood off and looked at it with a satisfied air, thinking how happy she would be if Kenton could only enjoy this room with Rupert. Then she sighed and murmured to herself that it could not be, but that she was thankful she had her brother.

On the following evening Rupert and Kenton came home, having won the highest honors of the college. On the way home, Rupert became suddenly ill, and when he reached the Hall he had to be taken at once to his room, little suspecting how long it would be before he would leave that room.

The next morning he was very ill. A week

went slowly by, and there was no improvement. The doctor could not account for his being taken so suddenly ill, neither could he give his disease a name. He had never seen any one in just this condition. The patient complained mostly of his head, and talked unceasingly of Kenton Lorrimer and Dorothy Donald.

One day Rupert asked his mother to send for Kenton. Lady Ross did so rather unwillingly, and when Kenton arrived, she sent Daphne from the room. Daphne could hardly endure this, for she had built her hopes on seeing Kenton this time, if never again. Rupert requested that all should leave the room save Kenton, and when they were gone he turned to Kenton, and told him that he had a clever scheme in view. Kenton asked what it was, and Rupert replied that every one, even to the doctor, considered he would never recover, but he was sure that he would. But he was going to let them think he would die, and when he was very ill he would have a request to make.

"They will of course grant me anything on my deathbed," he said, "and Kenton, what do you suppose that request will be?"

"I haven't the least idea," Kenton replied.

"I mean to get them to promise me that Daphne shall be your wife. I think this the only way to secure their consent."

Kenton listened eagerly to this, and when Rupert ceased speaking, he grasped his hand.

"Oh, Rupert, if this plan only would succeed!"

"Why there's no doubt about that, Kenton," he replied. "I am sure we will have success. I have

not been so ill all along as I appeared to be, and remember, Kenton, I shall continue to grow worse every day—I mean I shall make believe, until possibly a week goes by, so as not to arouse suspicion. Then I shall make my request. They will of course grant it, then I will at once begin to improve. Then your road is clear.”

“But suppose,” said Kenton, “they promise you this and then, when they find that you will not die, they should break that promise.”

“Oh! don’t be uneasy, Kenton. I’ll fix that. Trust me to that.”

“All right then, Rupert,” he replied, “I don’t see how Daphne and I could get along without you. I should never have thought of that. Daphne used to say you could always think of just the right thing.”

“And now, Kenton,” Rupert continued, “I think you had better call the others in, for I would not have them suspect anything for the world.”

Kenton did as Rupert bade him, and in a short time left for home, after Rupert had made him promise to come every day. “For you know, Kenton, I want to be with you all I can, what time I live, for I think I will die, Kenton.”

So Rupert appeared to grow worse every day. He was, in reality, very ill, but not so ill as every one thought. When a week had gone by, one day he lay perfectly quiet all day, and did not appear to notice anything or any one. He could hear his father and mother whispering with the old doctor anx-

iously, and he saw Daphne, with tears in her eyes, leave the room more than once, so as to not let him see her weeping, and he knew that now his plan would be a success. So that night some time near midnight, he called Lord Ross to his bedside. "Papa, I am going to ask a question, and I want you to answer me truthfully. I am not afraid to die, and if I must die, I have one request to make. I want you to tell me honestly, if I must die."

Lord Ross was taken utterly by surprise; he had not expected Rupert to ask anything like that, and hardly knew what answer to make him, for he did not want his son to know that they feared he would never recover.

"Don't ask me that question, my son, ask me anything else but that."

But Rupert continued, "If I must die, papa, please do not mind telling me, for I wish to know, very much. I am almost sure you think I will, so why try to make me think otherwise? Now answer me, please, am I going to die, papa?"

"Yes, my son," the Earl said falteringly. "If you must know, I fear that you will. Why do you wish to know?"

"Because if I must die, I have a request to make, papa, and will you grant me this, the last thing it may be that I shall ever ask of you?"

"Yes," said the Earl, as the tears streamed down his cheeks. "I will grant you anything, no matter what it may be, if it lies in my power."

"Call mamma, then," said Rupert, "I must have her promise, too."

The Earl did as Rupert bade him, and when Lady Ross stood by the bedside, Rupert looked up at her and smiled faintly, then said, "Mamma, will you promise to grant me the last thing I shall probably ever ask of you and papa? He has already consented to do this, and now will you make the same promise?"

Lady Ross loved this boy, her first born, more than all else, and now what would she not do that he would ask of her, on his deathbed? So she, too, gave her promise, as Lord Ross had done, neither of them suspecting what that request would be.

Rupert closed his eyes and was silent for a few moments, and then, opening them, he said, "Under no circumstances will either of you break this promise to me, come what may?"

"Under no circumstances will we break this promise to you, come what may," they repeated after him.

"We will do this for you as we hope for Heaven," added Lord Ross.

"Thank you," said Rupert. "And here is my request—that each of you will give your consent for Daphne to become the wife of Kenton Lorrimer."

"Granted," said Lord Ross. "I have promised, and would not break that promise made to my dying son, though I should lose my life."

But Lady Ross fell upon her knees by the bedside, and, taking his hand in both her own, as the tears flowed freely from her eyes, she said, "Oh, Rupert,

why did you ever cause me to make a promise that cannot be broken? God grant that I may die before I shall see Daphne the wife of Kenton Lorrimer."

"Mamma," Rupert said, "you make a great mistake when you think that Kenton is so unworthy of Daphne's love. And now that I have that promise I think I can die satisfied. I have been unhappy since she has been growing thinner and paler every day. It has made my heart ache to see my little sister so unhappy. But now I am happy," and turning his face to the wall, he was again silent.

Rupert lay with his face to the wall all that night and the following day until Kenton came. And when he bent over him he whispered, "Rejoice, Kenton, for she is yours."

Kenton's heart gave a great bound, and it was with an effort that he refrained from giving vent to his joy in words. But the pressure he gave Rupert's hand told plainly how thankful he was.

"Papa," said Rupert, turning to Lord Ross, "call Daphne."

Lord Ross gave Lady Ross a look of alarm and started from the room. But her ladyship asked him to stop a moment and, going to the bedside, she told Rupert that if he had anything to say to Daphne she would tell her and there would be no need for Daphne to come in the room.

"No, mamma," said Rupert, "you have given your promise. It cannot be broken. I would much rather speak to Daphne myself."

Lady Ross bit her lip and turned from the bed, while Lord Ross again started for Daphne.

In a moment more Daphne came into the room and when she perceived Kenton standing there, she sprang forward with the glad cry:

"Oh, Kenton, we've met at last! Such a long time we've been parted. But thank Heaven we meet once more, if never again!" Then dropping his hand, she turned to Rupert, and as the tears rolled down her cheeks, she fell upon her knees by his bed. "Now, dear brother, what is it you wish to say to me?"

He took her hand and then that of Kenton, and joining them together, he said: "I've won papa's consent and mamma's for you to marry Kenton, Daphne. They promised me this because it is probably the last thing I shall ever ask of them, for they tell me I must die. I wanted to tell you of this myself, for I know you would rather hear that, Daphne, than anything else in the world."

"Oh! thank Heaven," she cried. "Rupert, you always were a dear, good brother. But do not tell me I must lose you. Oh, do not tell me you are going to die! I could never live without you, Rupert, indeed I could not. You have always been the dearest one in all the world to me. And oh, do not tell me you must leave me."

"You will have Kenton instead of me," he said, "and I will not be missed so much."

"But, dear brother," she said, "I do want you

both," and, burying her face in the bed-clothes, she wept.

"Do not weep, Daphne," Rupert said, sadly, as he saw that should he really die, how it would trouble his sister.

"Do not weep," she repeated. "Oh! how can you ask such a thing of me, Rue, when I must lose my only brother," and raising her head she threw her arms about his neck and pressed a kiss on his brow.

This was done quickly, but there was time enough for Rupert to whisper, "Don't cry so, Daphne. I shan't die, this is some more of my planning to get papa's and mamma's consent. Hush!" he whispered, as he saw that she was about to make an outcry. "Don't give me away."

Daphne suddenly stopped weeping and Lady Ross said, "I think it time for you to go to your room, Daphne."

"No, no," she replied, "I shan't go to my room yet, mamma. I haven't had a word with Kenton."

"Nor do I think you should here at your brother's deathbed."

"Very well, mamma. I will go then," she said, "for now you have given your promise and it cannot be broken."

She then left the room, happier than she had been since the day she had promised Kenton to be his wife. But she could not exactly understand the meaning of Rupert's words; she only knew he would not die, and that she could be with Kenton

once again, and that nothing could come between them.

When the doctor came the following day, Rupert was of course just a little better, and continued in this way until a week had gone by, and then the old doctor told Lord and Lady Ross that he thought with careful nursing he would recover. Lady Ross was of course overjoyed to hear this. But imagine how much she regretted having made, as she termed it, "that fatal promise." And one day about two weeks later, when Rupert was so much improved that he could sit up, she asked him to release her from the promise. But Rupert said, "Mamma, do you not remember telling me you would break that promise under no circumstances?"

"Yes," she replied. "I know I said that; but I think it nothing but right that now you are almost well again you should release me."

"No," said Rupert, "I don't think I shall do this. I am just as anxious to see Daphne and Kenton marry as I was the night you made the promise, so do not ask me again. Deathbed promises are not so easily broken."

"That was no deathbed," she persisted. "For you did not die after all."

"Well," he replied, "if I had died it would have been the same, as far as the promise is concerned. And I consider that promise as sacred as though I had died, and I shall never release you from it."

"So be it, then," she said, haughtily; "I was never known to beg. When Daphne goes to the

almshouse you alone will be responsible for it, and you can bear the blame."

"Well, mamma, I'll certainly do that very thing. I am sure when you see how very happy Daphne will be, you will not regret your promise."

"I shall regret it to the longest day I live," she said, coldly. "But I hope I'll never live to see Daphne married to that man."

"Why, mamma," he said, "do not talk like that."

"I meant exactly what I said," she replied, as Daphne came in and she arose to leave the room.

"Sit down, Daphne," said Rupert, when their mother was out of hearing, "and I will tell you how I won their consent."

She drew a low foot-stool up and sitting down at his feet, she leaned her head on his knee and said, "Do, please, tell me, Rupert, for I've wondered so much."

Then he told her all the story. When he was through she laughed a merry, ringing laugh, that sounded like old times.

"Rupert, I declare, you are an enigma! No one but you could have thought of that, and if they had, I am sure they could not have carried it out with the success you did. And now I must repay you," and, putting her arms about his neck, she whispered, "I'll be a good little sister to Dorothy for that," and she kissed him a dozen times without once stopping for breath.

"There now," she said, "I think I've paid you too

many, and you must give a part of them back again."

"Well, well, little sister, I think that repaid me amply for anything I could have done for you. But then, of course, I do not charge you anything, so I'll give all that back again."

"No," she replied, "just give me part and save the others for Dorothy."

"Why, Dorothy would not accept them," he replied.

"Oh, but she will when you are married," Daphne replied.

"I'll have another lot on hand by that time, so I'll give you all them," and he kissed her in return for each time she had kissed him.

Kenton came pretty soon and as Daphne had not seen him since the night Rupert had joined their hands, she was overjoyed to see him, and the three talked for a long while about how well Rupert's plan had succeeded. Then Rupert pretended to get tired and went off to rest and to sleep, leaving the lovers alone. After Kenton had lingered as long as he thought best he took his leave, blessing Rupert Ross all the way home, and he told Dorothy, who came to the gate to meet him and inquire about Rupert, that he was so much improved that she need not be surprised to see him coming to see them at any time. Then he told her what a nice, long talk he had with Daphne, and that she—his sister Dorothy—would have the best boy in England for her husband. Her eyes sparkled brightly at this and she said, "I surely ought to be happy with the best husband and the best brother in England."

CHAPTER XXIX

The Christmas holidays had come and gone. The snows had fallen and melted away, the cold, bleak, wintry winds were past. Winter had gone and in the place was glad, joyous, beautiful summer. The sunlight flashed over the sparkling waters of the running brooks and the gleaming Thames. The birds sang, the bees murmured to the flowers, the wind whispered to the leaves, and all the strange, sweet voices of nature seemed to call, "Fresh water and green woods, ambrosial sunshine and sunflecked shade, chattering brooks and rustling leaves. Glade and sward and dell, lichen and cool mosses, feathered ferns and flowers, green leaves, green leaves—Summer! Summer! Summer."

The glad summer time was here again. But it had not brought gladness to the heart of poor, lonely little Essie Lorrimer. As she told Dorothy she should do, she had at last given up all hopes of ever seeing her lover again. And she told Dorothy that she would gladly welcome death. And Dorothy would reply, "Do not talk so, Essie, I beseech you! It troubles me to hear you talk like that."

But on this particular night in the latter part of June, she said she was sure something dreadful had happened to Claude, for it had been three months since she heard from him.

"Oh!" said Dorothy, joyfully, "perhaps he's coming home and will not write, so as to take you by surprise! Indeed, Essie, I feel just like he's coming

this very night. It seems that something whispers in my ear, 'Claude is coming home after all these years.' "

Mrs. Lorrimer was sitting by a table reading, Dorothy and Essie were seated in the door, Kenton standing by their side. He had a very grave look on his handsome face, as he heard his sister talk so hopelessly. He, too, joined in with Dorothy, to try to cheer her.

"Yes, Essie, Dorothy is right. I'm sure Claude is coming home. Do not give up hopes yet. Hark!" he whispered. "Look! There are two men coming up to the gate."

"Oh! it's Claude. I know it is," Dorothy exclaimed, breathlessly.

On the men came until they reached the gate, when Essie sprang to her feet.

"Oh, thank Heaven!" and ran toward the gate, followed by Kenton.

Mrs. Lorrimer stepped to the door just in time to hear Essie exclaim, "Oh! thank God! It is you, my Claude, my wanderer returned!"

"Yes, my faithful little Essie, it is I."

Kenton seized the hand of the other gentleman with the glad cry:

"Welcome, Uncle Roger."

They all entered the house and Essie, with tears of joy streaming from her eyes, exclaimed, "Oh! mamma, he has returned, and my mourning has changed to rejoicing."

Claude advanced toward Mrs. Lorrimer and gave

her outstretched hand a vigorous clasp. Then Essie led Dorothy up to him and introduced her. He clasped her hand in his own and as the tears of joy stood in his eyes, he said, "So this is Dorothy, of whom you have all been writing in such terms of praise."

"Yes," said Kenton, quickly. "That is the little sunbeam that has been the joy and light of this home for more than four years."

"Thank you for being so kind to my little Essie," he said, bending over her, still holding her hand. "You are indeed a sunbeam, and I shall call you that."

He then turned to Essie, who was smiling through her tears and, leading her to a sofa, they sat down side by side, he holding her hand, each too happy for words.

But in the mean time, Uncle Roger talked enough for them all. He had so much to tell, and explained why Claude had been gone so long, saving Claude the trouble of telling that himself.

After a while a mischievous look came into Dorothy's eyes and, stealing up to Essie, she pretended to be whispering, but she was talking loud enough for Claude to hear. She asked Essie if she remembered what she said she should do when Claude came home? But Essie did not remember, and Dorothy said, "You said you would talk enough for six little girls when Claude came home, and here you've been sitting these two hours and haven't said six words!"

"Looks like she would talk to me, when I've been gone so long, doesn't it, little Sunbeam?" Claude said.

Essie turned, and the look she gave Claude plainly proved that she spoke the truth when she said, "I'm just too happy to talk, Claude. But I want you to talk to me of yourself."

He then began to talk in good earnest and when Dorothy saw that she had succeeded in getting them to talking, she stole away and left them to themselves.

The hours flew by as if on wings until it was long past the hour of midnight, and Mrs. Lorrimer said if they did not retire they would not get much rest that night. They all declared they were not a bit sleepy, but supposed they could be together on the morrow, and it would be best to try and get a little rest. Essie said she was almost afraid to go to sleep, lest she should awake the next morning and find it all a dream. But Claude told her to have no such fears, for they were indeed there and they should never be parted again.

It was a long time before Essie closed her eyes in sleep, for she could do nothing but think of Claude. Sometimes she would fancy it was all a dream, but when she thought of the many things which Claude had said to her, she knew it was a reality. At last she fell asleep and when she awoke the sun was shining in through the window and Dorothy was whispering in her ear to make haste for Claude had been walking the floor for the last half hour trying

to be patient until she should come. She said that her sympathy was at last aroused and she had come to see if Essie did not think it time to be moving?

"Indeed I do think so," Essie said, smiling happily. "I don't know why I slept so long."

"Why, you did not sleep so long after all," Dorothy replied, "for you know it was long past midnight before we retired, and the last I remember, you was saying you wasn't a bit sleepy, and didn't think you could go to sleep."

With the aid of Dorothy, Essie was soon dressed and looking lovelier than she had looked in the five years that Claude had been gone. She wore a blue dress, and with her golden hair coiled gracefully at the back of her shapely head, and a half open rosebud pinned at her throat, she did indeed look beautiful.

"Why, Essie dear," Claude said as he advanced to meet her, "I do really believe you have grown lovelier since I have been gone—I did not think there was any room for improvement. I don't think I ever saw you looking so lovely before."

"Do I?" she said, as she laid her hand on his arm, and looking lovingly up in his face, she continued, "I am glad I please you, Claude. But, dear, what makes you think there was no room for improvement? I am sure there was and is yet. I want to talk of you. You are just as handsome as ever, Claude, but there are deep lines on your face. What is the cause of that?"

"Trouble, Essie dear, trouble. I sometimes think

it strange that my hair is not as white as snow. To think I had not seen my little angel in all these years! And when I received Kenton's letter telling me that you were so ill, I think I was on the point of going mad. If an earnest prayer ever fell from my lips, it was that you might be spared to me. I know there is no need to ask you if you love me still. I know by those beautiful blue eyes looking at me so lovingly that you do."

"Love you, Claude," she said, "I love you just the same and always will."

"And, Essie," he replied, "there's no use to try to tell you how dear you are to me. When I was in the Indies, I would get so discouraged, when the struggles were the hardest, that I would sometimes think I would just give up. And then a little girl with tearful, pleading, blue eyes and golden hair would come before me, and your words would seem whispered in my ear, 'Remember, that far away in old England there is a little girl, waiting patiently, lovingly, longingly for your return. And though she is many miles away, she will always be true,' and I would take courage and work the harder. And now, Essie, I have my reward. I have as much money as Lord Ross himself, and all we lack is the title. You will be a lady at last, Essie, and of course the title makes no difference."

"I do not care for the title or the money either," she said. "I care for you, Claude, and now that I have you back again I shall be as happy as the years are long."

"I am happy now," he said, smoothing back her golden hair from her white brow; "but when we are married I shall be almost too happy to live. And, Essie, we will have to name another wedding day. But we will not say at Christmas this time, for that has proved unlucky. Besides, I don't want to wait so long. When will you be ready, Essie?"

"Any time that pleases you, Claude," she replied.

"Well, right this moment would please me," he said. "But I suppose we can't be married just now. Let me see; this is the twenty-seventh of June. Suppose we say the last day in this month. Do you think that too early?"

"Too early?" she replied. "Well I should say I do not. When we've been betrothed just six years this month, and you've been gone over five years. I do not think it too early, Claude, and if I did I should not say so, for I wish to please you in all things."

"Well, my darling," he said, gently, "you certainly have your wish, for you do please me in all things."

"But, Claude," she said, "I had not thought before, but I don't really see how I'm to get ready by the last day of this month. I haven't made my wedding dress."

"Why, dearest," he said, glancing down at the dress she wore, "it doesn't matter about the dress. Why, the one you are wearing now looks pretty enough."

"Claude, you naughty boy!" she said, laughing gaily.

"Why, you would look as lovely in a plain blue muslin as other people would look in satin and diamonds," he replied.

"I see you haven't forgotten how to flatter," she said. "But I shan't be married in a muslin dress, even if you do think it pretty enough," with a pretty little pout.

"What's all this talk about a dress?" said Mr. Lorrimer, coming to the door.

"Oh! Uncle Roger, do come here and tell me what to do," exclaimed Essie. "Claude wants to be married the last day of the month, and here I haven't even bought my wedding dress, let alone made it. I'm sure I can't get it made in that time. What am I to do?"

"Why, that problem is easily solved, little girl," Uncle Roger said. "Just send me to London for one that's ready made. I'm sure I can get one to suit."

"That's just the idea," said Claude. "Now, little blue eyes, you've no excuse, so the last day of June it shall be."

"Very well, then," she replied, "anything to please the little boy who has always been in so much haste to get married."

"I think I am a very old little boy—just thirty-four, or will be very soon," he replied, laughing. "So you'll have to marry an old bachelor after all."

"Well if he suits me, you must not say anything, and I assure you that he does."

"Why of course I shan't say anything," he replied. "But here comes our little Sunbeam. I must tell her how soon I'm to have a dear little wife. Say, Sunbeam, do we look very much like we are going to be married in just three days?"

"Well, I should say that you do," Dorothy replied. "It would be difficult to tell which of you looks the happier."

"Our looks do not deceive you," he replied. "We are indeed happy."

"You'll understand it all, Dorothy, just a few days before you and Rupert are married," said Essie.

"What!" said Claude. "You don't mean to tell me our little Sunbeam is engaged?"

"Why yes," said Dorothy, quickly, "I am, and to the best boy in England. Oh, of course, I mean outside of Claude," as she saw Essie about to speak.

"May I ask his name?" Claude said, addressing Dorothy.

"Why yes," she replied. "His name is Rupert Ross, the son of the Earl of Rossville Hall, and your cousin."

"Well, I declare," he ejaculated. "So I am to have a sunbeam for a cousin and an angel for my wife. Why who ever heard of such luck befalling just such an unworthy fellow! When is this other wedding going to take place?"

"I don't know," Dorothy replied, "for we have

never set any time. Rupert is very young yet, so am I, and we are in no haste. I guess it won't be a great while."

"Well, I know if I were Rupert, it would not be a great while," Claude replied.

"Now do not say a word," Dorothy said, playfully. "For just remember what a long time you have been betrothed to Essie."

"Well now, Sunbeam, you must not blame me with that, for I had to go away. But you can bet if I had stayed in England, it would not have been so long. As Essie was saying, I have always been in a hurry to get married, and destiny would not let me. But we'll be married anyway, won't we, sweetheart?" he said, turning to Essie.

"Yes," she replied, "if it is after five years of waiting. Now, suppose I had run away with another fellow while you were gone?"

"No," he replied, "I won't suppose anything of the kind. I should have gone stark mad. It is enough to know that you did not and would not."

"You are right, she would not do that," said Dorothy. "If you could have come upon her some time when she was sitting alone, looking eastward, with her eyes dim with tears, you would have thought she was going to die of grief, instead of running away."

"Poor little Essie," he said, tenderly, "to think I was the cause of all that!"

The tears came to Essie's eyes as she thought of the long, lonely years when Claude was absent.

"Now, Essie dear," he continued, "you are not going to let those beautiful eyes grow dim with tears just at the thought of that, are you? Do not think of that, dear. Just imagine I have been in England all the time."

"Oh, dear," said Dorothy, catching up the corner of her apron, "that will never do!" as she wiped the tears from Essie's eyes. "Just let me get those tears out of the way so you can see. Now then, look down the road, some one is coming."

That "some one" proved to be Rupert and Daphne. Dorothy bounded down the steps and ran to meet them and tell them who was there. When they reached the house, Rupert was holding one of Dorothy's hands and one of Daphne's.

Daphne could hardly wait until she reached the house to see Uncle Roger, but Rupert was more anxious to meet Claude. He had always in some unaccountable way felt strangely drawn toward this unknown cousin. Daphne rushed up to Uncle Roger and threw her arms about his neck.

"Excuse me, Uncle Roger, but I'm so glad to see you, I could not help giving you a hug! Don't you remember that little girl in Spain, who used to call you 'Uncle Roger'? And indeed you do seem just like my uncle. And who knows but what you may be some day?" she said, glancing at Kenton. "This is Daphne, Uncle Roger—Daphne Ross."

"Why, is it?" he exclaimed, joyfully. "I'm so glad to see you, Daphne. And so you are a young lady now! Why I never would have known you."

And just as pretty as you were when you used to sit on my knee and prattle your baby talk! I have thought of you many times, and I did not think I should ever see you again."

"And I've thought of you, Uncle Roger. But I have not yet met my cousin," she said, turning to Claude and holding out her hand.

"Welcome back to England, cousin, and to Ross-ville Hall."

He returned her salutation and then said to Dorothy, "Why, Sunbeam, here is another little girl to add to my list of pretty relatives. I declare, I'm fortunate."

"And so he has given you a new name, Dorothy," said Rupert. "Well, it suits remarkably well, for are you not the sunbeam that brightens all the dark places in my life?"

Rupert and Daphne learned of the wedding before they started for the Hall, for Essie said that Daphne and Dorothy must be her bridesmaids.

Mr. Lorrimer went to London the following day and did not return until it was growing dark. Dorothy met him at the gate and knew from the mysterious looking bundle he carried that he had succeeded in getting a suitable dress. And when this bundle was opened, she clapped her hands and gave a little cry of delight.

"My! isn't that lovely, Essie? Claude will love you more than ever when he sees you in your bridal dress!"

"I hope he will," she replied, blushing, "for I will certainly appreciate all his love."

CHAPTER XXX

The last day of June had come, and a lovelier day never dawned upon this old earth than this, Essie's wedding day.

"What a glorious morning!" said Dorothy. "I am sure if there's any truth in the old proverb, Essie, yours will be a happy wedded life. I do think this is the loveliest day I ever saw. It looks as if nature was doing her best to celebrate your wedding day."

"It surely looks that way," Essie replied. "And I think I deserve a happy wedded life. I have had so many, so very many, disappointments."

"They are over now," said Dorothy. "That is a thing of the past, while happiness will be for the future. Won't it, Claude?" she called.

He went up to them and said, "What is it, Sunbeam, that's for the future?"

"Happiness," she replied. "I have been telling Essie how happy she will be. Don't you think she will?"

"She will certainly be happy," he replied, "if it lies in my power to make her happy. I should be a miserable wretch not to do my best to make her happy, after she has waited for me so faithfully—five long years."

"And I am sure she will be happy," said Dorothy.

The wedding was to be a very quiet one and just a few of the most intimate friends were to be invited. The bridal couple were to stay with Mrs. Lorrimer until Claude could build a beautiful home

just a short distance from Rossville Hall. He had asked her if she still desired to go to America on their wedding tour, but she replied that she did not, that she had much rather stay at home, where they could be alone in their new-found happiness. This suited Claude exactly, for he, too, preferred the quiet and rest of home to another voyage across the stormy waters. So they decided to spend their honeymoon in old England, at her girlhood's home—the home where she had spent so many lonely hours, and where she should now spend so many happy ones.

Dressed in her bridal robes a few hours after, she looked, as Claude said, just as he imagined the most beautiful angel in Heaven looked. She wore a beautiful white dress of flowing satin, and with pearls around the neck, pearls on the white arms and pearls in her golden hair, Uncle Roger's wedding present, and a bouquet of bride roses and lilies of the valley in her hand, she took her place by the side of him whom she had loved so long, her face beaming with happiness and a heart bounding high with hopes of the future, and he who was to call her wife looked down on her with eyes full of love and tender meaning. And when the words were spoken which made them man and wife, he whispered, "Mine at last—after five years."

"Yes, Claude, yours at last. Thank Heaven we shall be parted no more in this life."

They then received the congratulations of their friends, and Dorothy was the first to press a kiss on

Essie's brow and wish her all the happiness that she so much deserved.

"What a handsome couple," said old Mrs. Murray, one of the ladies who had witnessed the ceremony. "I declare they do suit each other so well. He is handsome with his brown hair and dreamy eyes, and she is lovely with her golden hair and blue eyes. And then there are the bridesmaids, who look almost as lovely as the bride, and those handsome young men by their side. I think there will be two other weddings before many more days go by, if I may take it upon myself to prophesy."

And those of whom she was speaking were at that moment naming the day—just one year from that day—for Rupert and Kenton, who had been playmates in childhood, schoolmates in boyhood, now that they had reached manhood were to be married at the same time.

That night when the guests were gone, Claude and Essie were standing on the porch, gazing at the star-lit heavens. Taking her hand he said, as he pressed the first kiss on her pure white brow, "Essie, I would not be now where I was one year ago tonight for all the gold in the Indies! You are more precious to me than all else in the world. I never tire of telling you of my love, but if I should try until doomsday I could never tell you one-half."

"And, Claude," she said, as she smoothed back the wavy brown locks from his forehead, "I never tire of listening to your love story. I hope you will tell it to me every day."

"I shall certainly do that," he replied. "I used to say I could never love any one better than mother and dear sister Izetta. But I do. I love you more than I ever loved them. And to think you are my very own. I don't see how I lived without you so long; I'm sure I could not any more. You shall be my guiding angel, Essie, and direct my steps toward Heaven, and when I meet my mother and sister there, I will tell them it was you who directed me to Heaven, and when temptations crowded round, it was you who brightened the way, and with these dear little hands smoothed the lines of care from my brow, just as you are doing now. You think you are just smoothing back my hair, but you are doing more than that, you are smoothing away those deep lines of care and anxiety, Essie dear."

"I hope I can," she replied. "And do you really mean to say that it was I who directed your steps toward Heaven?"

"Yes," he replied.

"Oh, I'm so glad,—so very glad to know that I was the cause of that."

"I could not do a very great wrong," he said, "for your face would come before me, and I am sure something would whisper, 'Don't do that, for there is a little girl who, if she only knew, would grieve.' And, Essie dear, you know I would not do a thing to grieve you."

"I like to hear you talk like that, Claude, it makes me very happy," she replied. "I am sure you are the dearest husband in all the world."

"That is what I mean to try to be," he said. "For I think such a dear little wife deserves a good husband. And God helping me, I will be."

"You are already that," she replied, "so let us now talk of something else."

"All right then," he said. "Just to think that one week ago, I was on the ocean homeward bound. And now I'm safely landed with a bride standing at my side!"

"I think," he said, slowly, "it was a happy thing for Kenton and Dorothy, that I did leave, for by my leaving, they have also found a dear one."

"Had there been no changes, you would have been an artist yet," said Essie, "and would never have been an earl."

"And never have met you," he said, smiling. "I think those changes are all right after all, don't you?"

"Yes," she replied, "mamma told me when you went away it was all for the best, and if I could not see it in that light then, I would some day. I think she was right. And then if Lord Ross had not come to England, Kenton never would have gone to the town of S——. And then perhaps Dorothy would never have escaped from that dreadful old woman, and perhaps Kenton could not have gone to college. So now that we are married at last, I suppose it was for the best, after all."

"Yes, I'm sure it was," he replied. "'God moves in a mysterious way, His wonders to perform.'"

"How I love you, Claude," she whispered. "You can always make me so happy. You always manage to say just the thing I want to hear most."

"I know a little girl that I can say the very same thing about," he replied. "I love her with my whole heart. I mean to spend the remainder of my life in trying to live to please her. Would you like to know who this sweet little girl is? It is none other than my little sweetheart, friend, and wife, Essie Ross. There, don't blush so. I know you have not become accustomed to that name yet, but you may as well, for that is your name from this day on. Essie Lorrimer is just a dream of the past, and you know we are to live in the present. Do you think you would like to be Essie Lorrimer again?"

"No," she said, "I do not want to be anything but just Essie Ross. It seems that the Lorrimers have a passion for the Ross family. Uncle Roger loved your mother, Kenton loves Daphne, and of course I don't love you a bit. Then there is Dorothy, who is almost one of the family, Rupert. It seems that we are all determined to love none other than a Ross."

"Why, I think the Ross family equally in fault," he replied, laughing, "for of course all that love from the Lorrimers was solicited by the Rosses."

"I do not know," she said. "I think I should have loved you, Claude, had you never loved me."

"Now," he said gaily, "if you had, you would never have known it, for you did not know you

loved me until I gave you the symptoms, and of course if I had not told you, you never would have known."

"Yes, I think I should," she replied. "I was young then, very young, and I think I should have found out for myself before many more years. Some people say that the heart's first love is not constant, but I am sure they are wrong, for you are my first love, and I have never loved another than you. But how long it has been! When you were absent, Claude, Dorothy was the only one who ever brought a smile to my face, or a playful word to my lips. I think, as I told you, I should have died of grief had it not been for dear Dorothy. And when I was ill, and thought I must die without seeing my darling again, I gave her many loving messages to give you when I was gone. It makes me sad to think about it all."

"Don't tell me, then," he said, "if it makes you sad, for it makes me sad too, and we should be anything but sad on this, our wedding day.

"Don't let us think of that." "Don't do try to not think of it," she said. "But somehow the thoughts of those days will come back, and sometimes I can hardly refrain from thinking it is all a dream and that you are still in the Indies, but then I will look up and see your face, I know that you are really here."

"Look, Essie," he said, taking a book from his pocket. "Here is that little curl you gave me so long ago. It has been to the Indies, but returned to old England—after five years. I've

kissed that dear little curl many times and each time I looked at this little curl you grew dearer to my heart, and had I had the wings of a dove I would have flown away to you. I am sure there was not a moment, Essie, while I was away, but what I was thinking of you, and the promise I made long ago,—to return to you come what would. For I knew you were grieving your very life away, from the mournful tone of your letters. And, Essie, you cannot imagine how I felt, when I knew I was causing all that grief to come to you."

"You did not cause it, dear, you could not help it any more than I," she replied. "That was fate, inevitable. But destiny has changed its course, and now I am happier than I was ever miserable. Claude, I don't think there is an angel in Heaven more happy than I am."

"Or one more beautiful," he replied.

"I am not so sure about the beauty," she said. "But oh! I do know I was never so happy before. I wonder if I shall be this happy the remainder of my life."

"Yes," he whispered, "if I can make you so, and I am sure I shall do my best."

"As mamma said," Essie continued, "the more painful the parting, the more blissful the meeting. And if this is not bliss, standing by your side looking up in your handsome face, and knowing that I am your wife, then I will say there is no such thing as bliss. I wonder what makes me love you so, Claude? But I know why. You are worthy

of the love of any one; you are loyal and true, noble and good, kind to every one, and all that heart could wish."

"Now, Essie dear," he replied, "we should never use extravagant language, and we should worship no living being except God. But on this particular occasion, I admit I commit such a sin, though if the recording angel sets it down against me I believe he will credit me with a partial justification at least. How could I stand here and hear the dearest one on earth to me utter such words as those, and not feel an inclination to fall down and worship her?"

"I know it isn't right, dear," she replied; "but I think I have worshipped you all along, Claude, and shall continue to, so long as yonder moon gives forth her light."

And we leave them, hand in hand.

CHAPTER XXXI

Another six months had sped away on wings of love. Claude had completed his mansion, and furnished it in elegant style. The rooms which he had set apart for Essie were indeed a perfect paradise. Nothing had been left undone, and in this beautiful home we now find them, nearer and dearer to each other, if that were possible, than the day when they were wed.

Essie flitted about from room to room, always doing something for Claude's comfort, always thinking of something to please him. Indeed she had succeeded in driving those deep lines of care from his brow, and he had the same cheerful smile which he wore before he went away. His eyes sparkled with love, and he always had a loving word for his dear little Essie, who sang and played for him while he read as he lounged in an easy chair, and listened to the sound of her voice as it fell upon his ear like the low cooing of a dove. He told her that he feared she would spoil him, but she replied that she would not, for when she found that he was beginning to get spoiled, she would play the idler and have him read to her.

Dorothy seemed to be almost as joyful as Essie. She hardly knew which she liked best, her old home or Essie's new one. So she went from Mrs. Lorrimer's cottage to Essie's home, then from Essie's home back to Mrs. Lorrimer's, just the

same gay, blithesome Dorothy as of old, and as much beloved by every one as ever.

On Christmas Claude and Essie gave a grand ball to which all the gentry in that part of the country were invited. At this ball Dorothy caused many manly hearts to beat high with hope. Every one wished to meet the beautiful Miss Donald, but when they learned that she was Rupert Ross's affianced bride, and when they saw the many loving glances which she bestowed upon him, and how many more waltzes she gave him than any one else, their hopes sank.

"Countless the hearts that were lost that night,
Lost beyond recall,
To that fair one,
Pride of the ball."

Daphne also created quite a sensation. Those black glossy curls and flashing blue eyes played havoc with many hearts of the opposite sex. But she cared not for this. Looking gloriously beautiful, in a pale blue silk and a ruby necklace about her white throat, and bracelets of the same on her wrists, she lingered by the side of Kenton Lorrimer and would talk with no one else, neither would she dance.

"Why won't you dance, Daphne?" Kenton asked.

"Why, because I don't want to," she replied. "I never do anything here of late that I don't want to do, and that is the reason I do not dance. I had rather be with the one I love."

"But some of those young men are looking daggers at me," he replied.

"Let them look," she said. "Their looks don't bother me in the least. If they do not stop their gazing, though, I mean to tell them I shall take you in another room and charge a shilling admission for a look at you."

"I am not the one they are looking at so much, after all," he replied, laughing. "It is you they gaze at most. But when they do look at me, it is with a glance of hatred."

"Let them hate," she replied. "The more they hate, the more I love you. But I mean to have some fun out of those staring young men, Kenton. I am going to see what loving looks I can give you, and talk like a chatterbox, just to see them open their eyes with astonishment," and, giving Kenton a very loving look, she stole her hand in his and began to whisper something in his ear. This proved too much for the other young men, who turned away with something that sounded very much like a groan. Daphne laughed merrily at this.

"Oh, yes, Kenton, my plan was a success. I don't think they will be stupid enough to stare at us any more this evening."

The ball lasted until the "wee," small hours of morning, then the guests took their leave.

* * * *

About a week after the ball, the whole country was shocked with the horrible news that Lord Ross was dying. While out riding on horseback,

the animal became frightened, and plunging suddenly forward, Lord Ross was thrown against a tree, breaking the spine in two places, and injuring him internally. The horse ran on, never once stopping until he reached the Hall. Every one at the Hall was frightened almost to death, at sight of the horse coming home riderless. Two of the servants started immediately in the direction from which the horse had come, to search for the Earl. However, some one else was there before them.

It was not a great distance from the home of Claude Ross, between there and Mrs. Lorrimer's, and Kenton, who was on his way home from a visit to Claude and Essie, first met the horse and knew it to be the property of Lord Ross. He was unable to stop him, and fearing that some accident had befallen the rider, he quickened his steps and soon came upon Lord Ross, lying pale and still upon the ground.

The first thing that entered Kenton's mind was the horrible thought that he was dead. But then a low moan came from the sufferer's lips, and Kenton knew that he was living, but he thought that death was very near. It did not take him long to make up his mind. Help must be found at once. He was on the point of going back for Claude when he saw the two servants coming from the Hall. He told one of them to return at once for a carriage, and to break the news as gently as possible to Lady Ross, and to despatch another servant for the doctor.

The man soon returned with the carriage, and with the news that Lady Ross, on hearing of the accident which had befallen Lord Ross, and who for a long while had been troubled with heart-disease, had been struck down with that horrible disease, and they feared for her life.

"God, have mercy!" Kenton murmured. "Poor little Daphne!"

They lifted Lord Ross in gently and drove slowly to the Hall. Daphne was watching for them with tear-dimmed eyes, going first to her mother's bedside, and then back to look down the road for her father, wringing her hands in awful agony.

They carried Lord Ross in and laid him on the bed, then the doctor examined his injury and said aside to Kenton, "He can never recover, he will not see the sun rise tomorrow morning." Daphne overheard this and moaned,

"Oh! Heaven help me. My dear father going to die. Let me die too, oh! let me die too."

"No, no, Daphne," said Kenton, going to her side, "you must live for my sake. Please do not say that any more, it troubles me."

"I will not, Kenton," she replied. "But how am I to bear this? Mamma lying almost at the point of death, and papa dying. Oh! it is more than I can bear."

But Kenton soothed her with tender words as they stood by the Earl's bedside.

Rupert could not bear to stand calmly by and watch his father breathe his last, but stood alone

at the window, with the heavy curtains drawn around him, and his lips firmly pressed together. But never a tear came to his eyes—his was a sorrow too deep for tears. Lord Ross moaned feebly, then, opening his eyes, he beckoned Kenton and Daphne to come closer. And when they were nearer he asked, "Where is Marie? Is she not coming to bid me a last farewell?"

"She is very ill," Kenton replied, "and cannot leave her bed."

Lord Ross slowly closed his eyes, and then in a few moments more he opened them again and said, "Where is Rupert?"

Rupert came forward as he heard his father ask for him, and knelt down by his bed. "What is it father, that you would have me do?"

"It is this. I know I must die, my son; my time is short and very precious. And ere I go, I would ask of you a promise. Daphne will have no father to guide her now, for I will soon be gone, and you must promise to be a father to her, as well as a brother. Don't, Daphne," he said, as she again burst into tears. "Don't weep for me, for my death will bring happiness to other hearts."

But none understood his meaning, save Rupert.

"My son," the Earl continued, "watch over your sister with tender care, and keep her feet from the paths that lead astray. You will not have this to do long, for she will soon have another to lead her through this life, one as noble and good as ever breathed the breath of life, one I have known since you were all children together,

and his deeds have all been good. Care for your mother, Rupert, for she is growing old, and will not be long in joining me. Try to comfort her, Rupert, and bless her old age. Would that I could see Marie once more in life, that she could press her lips to my brow once again, before I pass through the dark valley of death."

"I will go for mamma," Rupert said. "You shall see her once again, though I have to carry her in my arms." And leaving the room he went to the bedside of Lady Ross. Before he could speak she asked,

"How is your father, Rupert?"

"Mamma," Rupert replied, "I have come to carry you to papa. He is dying, mother, and does so want to see you once again. He has been calling for you. I will carry you in my arms, mamma, if you will only go."

"No, Rupert," she said, "perhaps the Almighty will give me strength to reach him."

Slowly she rose from her bed, and leaning heavily on Rupert, she murmured, "O Heaven, help me! I'm going to bid Adrian a last farewell. But thanks be to God, I shall soon join him, and will not be left alone in this world. For my children have both learned to love some one else more than me."

Rupert made no reply to this, and they reached the bed where Lord Ross lay, and, kneeling down by his side, Lady Ross threw her arms about his neck and wept.

"Don't weep, Marie," said Lord Ross.

"No," she said as she ceased to weep, "why should I weep, for will I not soon join you? But can it be, Adrian, that you are going first,—going first and leave me all alone, in this cold, cruel world, with no one to love me."

"I must go, Marie," he replied, "but you will have Rupert and Daphne left to love you."

"No," she replied, "no, they do not love me. Their hearts are bound up in that Lorrimer family, and I will be left alone. No," she continued, "I will not, Adrian. I will go with you. Fan me, Rupert, I can hardly breathe. Farewell, Adrian," she said, as she pressed a kiss on his brow, and fell back in Rupert's arms.

He bore her to her room, and again despatched a servant for the doctor. Kenton then came to Rupert's side and said, "Lord Ross wishes to see you once again. Death is rapidly approaching, it cannot be a great while."

"Kneel down," said Lord Ross, as they again came to his side.

Down they knelt, the three side by side, and with his hands on their heads, he in turn gave each of them his blessing. Rupert first, then Daphne, and then Kenton.

"May God deal with you, as you deal with my child," he said to Kenton. "Promise me that you will be kind to her."

"I do most solemnly promise," Kenton replied.

"Then I can die in peace," he said. "The room is growing dark and cold, my life is almost run. God bless you, my three children, and bring us all

together once again. The pain is over now, the river is almost crossed, I have seen through the vale clear across to the banks of the beautiful stream. There I will wander and patiently wait to meet you all once more. Farewell, my children, farewell!"

Daphne pressed a kiss on his cold, clammy forehead. Even as she did this the spirit departed and he was dead.

"Gone," said Daphne. "Oh! he is gone, and I have no father now." Silently they left the room.

While the body of Lord Ross was being prepared for burial, Daphne and Rupert went to the room of Lady Ross, while Kenton went home to tell the news.

Lady Ross knew by the look they wore when they came in the room that Lord Ross was dead. But she said, "Rupert, am I left alone at last, when I thought I should be the first to go?"

Daphne knelt beside her bed and said, "Yes, mamma, he is dead."

This was too much for the weak action of her heart, and falling back on her pillow, she began to gasp for breath. "Oh! Rupert," said Daphne, springing up, "I have killed her, I have killed my mother."

"No, you did not, Daphne," he replied. "Don't think you caused her death. I knew from the first she would not recover."

"Oh! Rupert," Daphne cried, "we have no father now, and will soon have no mother!"

Only once more did Lady Ross gasp for breath, then she closed her eyes and all was over.

"Even now she has gone, Rupert," she said. "Oh! Rupert, you and Kenton are all that are left me now."

He led her gently from the room and tried to comfort her, as best he could, but his own heart was troubled too much to comfort another.

"Just to think, Rupert," Daphne said, "father and mother are both dead, and we are poor orphans left alone."

Kenton returned in a short time, accompanied by Dorothy, and, putting her arms about Daphne's neck, she begged of her to dry her tears, speaking such words of comfort and cheer that presently she ceased weeping, and was listening intently to what Dorothy was saying.

* * * *

What means this gloomy silence around the Hall, the hushed voices and soft footsteps? What mean these tears and sad faces, the sound of weeping and mourning, the closed shutters and darkened rooms?

These are the questions which would have been asked, and the answer would have been, The angel of death has entered this home and taken two of the inmates thereof.

It was morning again, and sitting by Daphne on the sofa, Rupert held her hand in his own, while Dorothy on the other side continued to whisper in her ear, so as to take her mind off her great bereavement. And that evening Lord and Lady Ross

were laid side by side in their last resting place. Together they journeyed through life and together they crossed the dark valley of death.

On the following day the will was read bequeathing the earldom to Claude Ross. Great was the surprise of every one at this, as the reader will remember Rupert had it kept a profound secret.

Claude did not want to take the earldom, for, as he told Rupert, he had no need of it now, as he was wealthy and, besides this, it looked like robbing Rupert of his just rights.

"But I do not want the title," said Rupert. "It was I who persuaded papa to make this will leaving the earldom to you."

Claude told him it was not right, that he appreciated his generosity but he should not accept the earldom. Rupert argued every side of the question with him. But still he answered no, kindly but firmly.

Then as a last resource, Rupert told Claude if he did not take up the title it should be dropped, for he had said since he was a small boy he should never be an earl and that he meant to keep his word."

"What!" said Claude, in astonishment. "Let that old and honored title drop? Why, it is one of the oldest names in England!"

"I cannot help that," Rupert replied. "But I will never be an earl, and if you do not accept this offer the title will most certainly be dropped. Now answer me once for all, Cousin Claude, will you accept this old and honored title and keep up the

name, or will you refuse and let the title drop, and go down with the years, forsaken and forgotten?"

"I cannot bear to think of that, Rupert, so I suppose I must accept."

Then the thought came to him that Essie would yet be Countess of Rossville, and he was glad that he did accept the earldom. And Rupert was glad too, for now he was free to do as he liked, and would not be compelled to wait for form or ceremony. He asked Dorothy what she thought of this, and if she would rather have been Lady Ross than just Mrs. Rupert Ross, and if she thought he did wrong in the way he had done.

"Why, no, Rupert," she replied. "You did one of the noblest deeds ever done, for was not Claude once an earl, and had the misfortune to lose it all, and you know he is glad to have it back again. Then you did not want it, neither did I. Why, do you know, Rupert, that the thought never once entered my mind that I should ever be a countess, not once. I was going to marry you for yourself, not to become Countess of Rossville. I am gladder to see Essie a countess than I should be if I were one myself."

"I am glad you think like that, Dorothy," he replied, "for I want to please you in all things."

So the news that Claude was to be Earl again was received with gladness on all sides.

CHAPTER XXXII

What is the meaning of all this stir and bustle around the Hall? Servants here, servants there, some trying to do everything, and at the same time doing nothing; others trying to do nothing, and having everything to do; bevvies of girls scattered about on the lawn; young men standing in groups, laughing, talking and smoking; altogether a different picture from the one which we last drew of the Hall. Time had passed on and things had changed greatly.

But our question has not yet been answered. What is the meaning of all this?

The meaning? Why, a double wedding is the meaning. Rupert and Dorothy's, Kenton and Daphne's wedding day was almost here. On the morrow the vows would be spoken for better or for worse. Grand preparations were going on at the Hall; guests had been invited from far and near; girls whom Daphne had met in France; young men whom Rupert and Kenton met at college. A large band had been engaged to furnish music for the guests, and the young people were enjoying it all. They were a gay group indeed, all the time happy, all the time gay, all the time trying to tease Dorothy and Daphne; but with little success, for they were not easily teased.

Six months had passed since the death of Lord and Lady Ross, and as the young people had set the day for the wedding, we remember, on Essie's wed-

ding day, they would not postpone the wedding another day longer. Rupert and Kenton told Dorothy and Daphne they thought they had waited long enough. And they agreed with them. Claude insisted that they should be married at the Hall.

The past six months had been passed by Rupert and Daphne, part of the time with Essie and Claude and part of the time with Mrs. Lorrimer, as they had no other relatives except Claude; and they had almost forgotten their sorrow in their great happiness. But never a day went by that Dorothy and Daphne did not put fresh flowers on the graves of Lord and Lady Ross, showing that if they had overcome their sorrow, the dear ones were not forgotten.

Poor, unfortunate Lady Ross, she realized her wish, that she might die before she saw Daphne the wife of Kenton Lorrimer.

The wedding costumes arrived from Paris, exactly alike in every way, and beautiful enough for a queen. The girls told Dorothy and Daphne they envied them their handsome lovers, and they laughed and replied that they were glad they were so soon to be married, lest they should take them from them. But the girls replied that they did not think that could be done, as Kenton and Rupert never saw any one else when Dorothy and Daphne were near.

The morning broke bright and clear, as did that day one year ago. And as Dorothy and Daphne

took their places by the side of their handsome lovers, it would have been difficult to tell which of the brides was the more lovely. Daphne, with her raven black hair and dark blue eyes, so tall and graceful, looked like a beautiful statue, and Dorothy, with her wavy brown hair, and expressive gray eyes, clinging half timidly, half fearlessly to Rupert's arm, looked almost childish yet very beautiful. They stepped out upon the floor, Rupert and Dorothy in front, while Kenton and Daphne brought up the rear, and the words were soon spoken which made them man and wife.

The evening soon arrived, the ball began, and they danced until the sun began to cast his rays on the following morning. Part of the guests left the Hall that day, while the remainder were to stay for a few days longer.

Happy is the wedding where true love reigns, and, as they gaze at each other with eyes full of love, we can tell at a glance how much each of them is beloved. What would this life be without the blessed boon of love? It is the true happiness of this life. There is a vacant spot in every heart that has never experienced this wonderful, over-powering passion called love; without it our lives would not be worth the living. It helps us to reach higher ideals, and enables us to occupy a higher sphere in the world. Come with me and gaze on this picture, of an old man lying on his deathbed. A man who has scoffed at love, and termed it nonsense. He is dying now, alone, with no loving woman to cheer

his last moments, no woman's tender voice to fall upon his ear like low mournful music, no loving hand to smooth his ruffled pillow, no sweet lips to press the last kiss on his death-damped brow. He has wandered aimlessly about from place to place, from day to day, wretched all his life, and now wretched at the last moment. Miserable is the one who knows not true love, but happy is he who knows thereof.

Uncle Roger watched all this merriment at the Hall with a self-satisfied air, and then a cloud came to his brow, and he murmured to himself, "All of them wealthy except Kenton, and it shall not be so. He shall not be left out, for I am an old man and have no need for all this money which I possess, and if Kenton will give me a home with him the remainder of my days, which I am sure will be few, I'll give him all my fortune. Claude has his fortune which he made in the Indies, with the title of an earl besides. Rupert has the fortune his father left him, while Kenton has, you might say, nothing, and it shall not be so."

He was so intent upon his thoughts that he said the last aloud, and Daphne, who happened to be passing at that moment, said, "What shall not be so? Uncle Roger, were you speaking to me?"

"No, child," he replied. "I was not speaking to you, but was thinking of something that concerns you. But I shall not tell you now, but will in a short time."

"Was it something good, Uncle dear?" she said as she pressed a kiss on his care-worn brow.

"Yes," he replied, "it was something good. Don't let it trouble you, lassie, for it was something very good."

"Well, Uncle Roger, it will not trouble me then," she said, and, laughing, continued, "I used to call you Uncle Roger, long ago, when I had no claim on you save that of love, but now just to think you are really my uncle! What would you have thought when first we met, if you had known that one day you would really be my uncle?"

"Why, I would have thought how proud I should be," he replied, "to be your uncle, for I am sure you are worthy to call any one uncle."

Kenton then came up to them, for wherever Daphne went, there went Kenton. Turning to him, Daphne put her arms about his neck.

"Uncle Roger and I were just talking about how queer it was that I should call him Uncle Roger when I first met him, and then really have him for an uncle after all."

"I'm very glad it turned out like that," Kenton replied. "I am sure I am. I suppose that accounts for Uncle Roger's being so fond of you when he first met you. But come along, Daphne—let us go for a walk; the sun is almost sinking, the walks are cool and shady. Just the time for a delightful little walk."

"Yes, take her off," said Uncle Roger, laughing. "You selfish boy, to think no one wants to say a word to her but you."

"Why of course I know no one wants to talk with her as much as I do, so there's the reason I'm selfish," he replied.

"We won't be gone long, Uncle Roger," said Daphne, "and then I'll devote the remainder of the evening to you."

As they walked away 'neath the cool shade of the magnolia trees, so will they walk down the path of life together; and as they walked on through the trees, they came upon Rupert and Dorothy seated on a rustic bench, her head pillowed upon his breast, with the tender love-light shining from their eyes. On they walked until they came to a small running brook, and as its mossy banks were never disturbed they presented the appearance of a soft velvety ridge, where each spring the starry dandelion and the blue-eyed violet grew. Across this brook a small foot bridge had been built, which was latticed, and overgrown by luxuriant grape vines. To this bridge they walked and watched the sun as he shed his last rays on the earth in honor of the dying day.

Here they lay plans for the future, and here we will leave them and in another chapter find them happy in their own home.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

In the now thriving little town of Rossville may be seen the splendid new bank of that place, and over it hangs a sign on which you may read, "Ross and Lorrimer, Bankers." Rupert had at last his heart's greatest desire; he and Kenton had gone into business as partners and had gained a lasting reputation as highly respectable and reliable business men.

In the suburbs of Rossville, among some tall old trees, may be seen a picturesque vine-covered mansion almost hidden among the trees, with beautiful flowers of every shade around. And this mansion, overhung with the wreathing honeysuckle and the twining jessamine vines, where the first summer flowers bloom and the songbirds are caroling all the day long, was the home of Rupert Ross. Just down the street is another mansion almost like the one described, and this was Kenton Lorrimer's home, where Uncle Roger sat in an easy chair and blessed the day he gave his nephew his fortune and came to live with him.

Mrs. Lorrimer, now a snowy-haired lady, lived at the Hall, happy in the thought that Essie was once more happy. And Essie, Countess of Rossville, played with the cooing baby, who had been named for both Uncle Roger and Claude, and the latter thought there was only just one baby in the world, and that, of course, was little Roger Claude, and Claude was always trying to trace some resemblance

between this wonderful little heir and Essie. And she in turn said he favored Claude. But Mrs. Lorri-mer laughed and told them he was not like either of them, but the very image of Uncle Roger.

"I hope he will make as good and noble a man as Uncle Roger," Claude would say, and Essie would answer, "If he looks like Uncle Roger, and is as noble and good as his father, he will indeed be a great man some day. And I mean to teach him to be like you both."

Ben Thomas escaped from the officers of the law in London after having shot one of them for trying to prevent his escape, and returned to the town of S—— in a furious rage over losing Dorothy, and Mrs. Miller, thinking the officers who had come with Rupert and Kenton had rescued Dorothy, began to beg of him to forgive her, as the policeman had made her tell. This was a mystery to Thomas, who forced her to tell all she knew. He then thought that perhaps the old man who rescued Dorothy was one of the men whom Mrs. Miller had told of his whereabouts, and was so angry that before he was aware of what he was doing, he pulled a revolver from his pocket and shot the old woman dead. He then left the country and was gone for two years. Then, thinking that possibly he could return without being molested, he returned to London, where he began to practice his infamous plots again. But the detectives were still on the lookout for him, and one day he was walking in one of the out-of-way streets when a pistol was thrown in his

face and a voice said, "Halt!" Quick as thought his hand sought his pocket. The officer knew what his purpose was and, determined that he should not escape a second time, he fired and the scoundrel fell to the ground.

For eight weeks he lingered between life and death, but with careful nursing he recovered, was brought to trial and sentenced for life in the penitentiary. Rather than live his life out in confinement, his hand again sought the deadly weapon, and placing it against his heart, fired, and fell dead in the court-room. Thus ended the life of one of the most wicked and vile men of the world, who after living a life of every wickedness, and not satisfied with having taken two other lives, then took his own, and went to stand before the great Judge of All as a self-murderer.

Olivia Merryington, whom the reader will remember, succeeded in entrapping Sir Reginald Stockwell in an engagement, and was married in the following October after we last saw them. Sir Reginald was not nearly so wealthy as she thought, and only married her for her money. The reader can imagine what the result was—a life of wretched poverty. Having squandered all Olivia's money at the gaming table, he was then compelled to go to work on a farm. And Olivia's fate was even worse than that of her sister, Gertrude, who, after having lost Lord Ross, never found that perfect man for whom she was looking. As Olivia advised her to do, she retired from society, and is an ugly, cross, peevish, veritable old maid, living a life of

misery and pining, because she did not accept the one offer which was made to her when she was a young girl, years before Lord Ross came to England. Gertrude vexed Olivia greatly by calling her a rustic farmer's wife, while she, Gertrude, still lived in peace and plenty neath her father's roof. She may have spoken the truth regarding "plenty," but as for "peace," she has but little, for each time she sees Essie—Lady Ross—she presses her lips together tightly and clenches her little fist as she thinks (we say she thinks, for of course no one else would think anything so absurd), that had it not been for that girl, she herself would have been Countess of Rossville, and she mutters between her teeth, "The little wretch! How I hate her! And poor Lord Ross, I do feel sorry for him. I'm sure he regrets his choice. But then, maybe, she won't live always, and then I'll yet be Lady Ross."

But the object of her hatred smiles sweetly as she passes, and bows a pleasant "Good evening," looking as if—could happiness cause life—she would live forever.

"Curse her!" the black-eyed Gertrude mutters as the carriage goes by. "I'd murder her if I thought I could without detection. I am sure Lord Ross would be glad, I am sure he has tired of her ere this."

But very differently would she have thought could she have seen Lord Ross when Essie reached the Hall. Folding her to his bosom, he murmured passionate words of love in her ear, telling her how precious she is to him. Mrs. Lor-

rimer, from her window, saw this, and murmured to herself, "Such happiness! Such undying love! It reminds me of the days when I was young and had a loving husband. Would that he could see how happy his children are today. But then," she thought, as she smoothed back her snow white hair, "I am growing old and soon we'll meet never to part. Then I'll tell him all, tell him how happy I was in my old age, though so much happier it would have been could he have stayed with me to see Essie and Kenton happily settled down in life. Who would have thought it that Kenton would have married the daughter of an earl and that Essie would have been a countess? I surely ought to be happy when I know that my children are. But I was beginning to think dear Essie would never be happy again; but, thank Heaven! she is, after five years."

CHAPTER XXXIV

We will now take one more look at our principal actors, and then bid them a last farewell.

It is May again, the month of all others when nature seems most grand. Rupert and Kenton are to take a day off from the bank and, as they wish to spend this day pleasantly, they decide to go out to the Hall and spend it with Claude and Essie, for they know if pleasure is to be found it is at the Hall, where cheerfulness and hospitality reign.

The day is spent in merrymaking and gladness, laughing and talking of olden times.

"Do you remember what you said, Kenton, one day long ago?" Essie asked.

"Why, Essie, I said so many things long ago, it would be difficult to remember all I have said. What was it?"

"Why, it was something regarding the person you meant to marry," she replied. "You said if you should ever take it in your head to marry, you would choose a girl with golden hair and blue eyes; and look at Daphne," she said as she laughed merrily, "she looks like that, doesn't she, with her black glossy hair!"

Kenton looked a little puzzled and then replied, "Well, I declare, Essie, I do remember saying that, but I had not seen Daphne then. That is the only plea I have to make. But at least she has the blue eyes, and of course I think black hair is the pret-

tiest now. And then, when I look at those golden curls of yours, I become puzzled, for then I can't really tell which is the prettiest. I'll just ask Rupert, he could always think of just the right thing."

And Rupert replied, as he glanced lovingly at Dorothy's wavy brown hair, "Why, brown is prettier than black or golden either. But the color of the hair makes no difference, for wouldn't I love Dorothy just the same if her hair was as white as snow?"

So they laugh and jest all day, making it a day to be long remembered by all.

That evening they go over to Mrs. Lorrimer's little cottage. No one is living there now, but the place is as lovely as ever, the flowers bloom, the birds sing their same glad songs, and after gathering some flowers to carry away with them as mementoes of their old home, they all return to the Hall.

Mrs. Lorrimer lingers until last, and says it seems like home yet. Claude reminds Essie of the day he first came to see Kenton, and she replies, "How odd that I should have gone to the Hall that day, and you a perfect stranger! But I was so alarmed lest Kenton should die I hardly knew where I was going. Little did I think that day that I would one day be your wife."

"Destiny sent you there, Essie," he replied; "it was your destiny to one day be Countess of Rossville. Had you never come to the Hall, I think we would have met in some other way. I once

gave up hopes of ever seeing you a countess, but as I said a moment ago, destiny came in and made me a lord and you a lady, and what a dear little countess you are."

Another little fairy has come to bless Claude and Essie's union, since we last visited the Hall, in the form of a little girl with golden hair and blue eyes. Claude says he is sure this one is like Essie, but Uncle Roger gazes at her with tear-dimmed eyes as he says to Claude, "The very image of your mother, Claude—my golden-haired Lorraine. She brings back to memory things of long ago, and her name must be Lorraine." And Essie, who still loves Dorothy as much as ever, says she must be named for her too. So they call her Dorothy Lorraine.

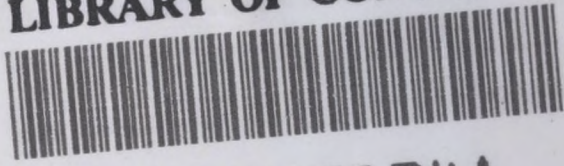
On the day of which I am writing, after their visit to their old home, Claude and Essie talk of the past until they reach the Hall, where they all assemble on the lawn, all except Mrs. Lorrimer and Uncle Roger. The former sits by her window, watching the happy group on the lawn. Her visit to her old home has brought back the thoughts of other days, while Uncle Roger sits in an easy chair with the little golden-haired Lorraine on one knee and on the other knee sits the little Roger, who is now a bright, interesting child almost three years old. More than four years have passed since the grand double wedding at the Hall, and still the people love to talk of the two handsome young men and lovely young women who were the chief actors in that double wedding.

Five years have passed since that memorable last day of June when Essie became the wife of Claude Ross, and happy have those years been. Essie says she does not see how so much happiness could be crowded in five short years.

See the difference! When Claude was absent she termed the years long and lonely, even endless, now they are not long enough. She is reaping her reward for being so patient, to wait so quietly those five long years for her lover's return. Daphne and Dorothy, it will be remembered, all had their troubles, but through it all they remained true to their lovers. They also have their reward.

After shadows came the sunshine, after sorrow came the gladness, after parting came the meeting—after five years.

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